

FAMOUS SIEGES
FROM TROY TO KUT



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After the siege: Havoc at Lucknow

(From a photograph by F. Berto in the Victoria and Albert Museum)

Chap IX

Frontispiece

FAMOUS SIEGES FROM TROY TO KUT

BY

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"True Stories of Modern Explorers", &c.

With Eight Half-tone Plates and Eight Maps

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Note

These sketches are drawn from the following sources. For the legendary story of Troy there is but one authority, Homer. The siege of Tyre is based upon the accounts of Arrian and Curtius in their histories of Alexander the Great; that of Acre by the Crusaders depends largely upon Geoffrey de Vinsauf's Chronicle of Richard I's Crusade. In the case of Antwerp, I have greatly condensed Motley's narrative; and for the siege of Gibraltar have drawn upon the History by Drinkwater, himself a participant in the event. For the French siege of Acre, Napoleon's own memoirs, besides those of Bourrienne and the marshals, have been laid under contribution. Sebastopol's siege has been drawn from the tomes of Kinglake, the recollections of W. H. Russell, and other sources; Lucknow's from the *History of the Indian Mutiny*, by T. R. Holmes, the work of the same title by Ball, the *Life of Havelock*, and other papers. In dealing with Mafeking, I have relied mainly upon the standard work on the South African War by the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery; and the affair of the Peking Legations depends upon the account of an eye-witness, the Diary of the Rev. Roland Allen. For Port Arthur, I have drawn upon the British Official History of the Russo-Japanese War, supplemented by the books of various war correspondents. Finally, the story of Kut comes partly from the Official History and General Townshend's own narrative, and partly from Sir A. Wilson's *Mesopotamia*.

FAMOUS SIEGES FROM TROY TO KUT

CHAPTER I

The Siege of Troy

If we land on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles and follow the stony track southwards for a few miles, we shall cross a swift, shallow stream to a desolate sandy plain. On our left the river winds away to the south-east, lapping the base of a low hill which is surmounted by piles of ruins. On our right, and only three to four miles distant, glitter the blue waters of the Ægean Sea. Nothing in this commonplace plain catches the eye except the mound and its ruins; but some distance beyond, the land rises into a mountain mass, capped by the dark crest of Ida. This barren, little level is one of the most celebrated places in the world, holy ground to countless students of ancient times; for this is the Plain of Troy, and yonder on the hill once stood the citadel of the town which (if Homer is to be believed) defied the efforts of 50,000 Greeks for ten long years. We are standing perhaps on the very spot where the craven-hearted Paris, beaten senseless by the superior skill of his enemy Menelaus, was carried off by the Trojans to his forlorn Helen. Yonder lies the place where the gallant Hector and

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the giant Ajax fought throughout a whole afternoon and were parted only by dusk. Somewhere hercabouts, but now effaced by time and the borrowing propensities of builders in search of ready-made bricks, once stood the proud walls upon which the Greeks gazed so long and so helplessly, round which Hector's dead body was whirled behind his savage conqueror's chariot, and through which—the credulous Trojans having themselves made a breach—the wooden horse passed which introduced their enemy into the fortress. All, all are gone, leaving nothing but the hill and the dun-brown plain, a few calcined ruins that tell how the triumphant Greeks burnt the town, and a few hoards of golden vessels, ornaments and jewels (hidden perhaps at the very instant when the enemy were killing and burning the inhabitants indiscriminately); buried in dust, but revealed 3000 years later to the spade of an inspired antiquary.

The siege of Troy, in fact, is but a legend, made up from many a tale which the ancient bards recited or sang at public festivals, until the great brain of Homer, more than two centuries after the event, wove them into the splendid narrative of the *Iliad*; but legendary or not, it is the most famous of all sieges, and it therefore claims pride of place here, however much or little the reader may believe in its details. In the *Iliad*, which you should read whenever Pope's translation comes your way, the fortunes of the actors are inextricably mixed up with the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology, beautiful if shadowy figures which permeated the whole of ancient Greek life. There we shall find Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom, with her flaming sword and her womanly sympathies; Juno, the mate of Jove, who hated the Trojans; Mars, the quarrelsome bully and idle child of the gods; Mercury,

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the fleeting messenger of Jove; finally, great Jove himself, who, watching the progress of events from his throne in Ida's clouds, wishes well to Troy, though he is too indolent and peace-loving to thwart those who would see the city destroyed. If the actions of these supernatural beings—who, we must remember, were ever present to the strong imagination of the Greeks, threatening them from behind the clouds, or speaking to them through storms or lightning, or affecting their daily actions in a score of ways—if these supernatural matters be disregarded, the *Iliad* becomes the story of a siege in great detail, such as might have occurred before many a strong city at that date; a story of individual combats and of furious general battles, of quarrels, truces, councils of war, which smacks too much of reality to be any mere poet's dream. Let us then believe that the siege of Troy occurred much as Homer described it, and, following him in brief outline, glean what we can of it.

On the plain between us and the sea are the Greeks, some 50,000 strong, in many detachments drawn from the various small city-states of ancient Hellas. Here are the long-haired men of Eubœa, with their quivering lances; there stand the Athenians under the wise general Menestheus, and near them is a small contingent from the little island of Salamis, led by the giant Ajax. Yonder are gathered the martial bands of Argos, Corinth and other Argive cities, the moving spirits of the war, whose king, Agamemnon, is commander-in-chief; under him are Diomed and other doughty fighters. Sparta's troops, not yet steeled to war by stern discipline, cluster round Menelaus, brother of Agamemnon, and husband of the stolen Helen, who at this very moment perchance is watching him from the walls of Troy. Pylos, near the tip of the

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Greek peninsula, has sent Nestor, aged indeed, but the wisest counsellor of all the Greeks; and from Ithaca and Cephallenia, on the Adriatic side, have come the prudent and noble Ulysses and his men, their galleys distinguished by vermillion prows. The islands, too, have sent bands of warriors: Cretans, under Idomeneus, and the men of Rhodes, clustered round the standard of Tlepolemus, the exiled son of Hercules. The greatest of all the heroes, Achilles, hails from Thessaly, in northern Greece.

The camp, the tents, the thousands on thousands of wooden spears tipped with bronze, the shining armour of the chiefs, the greaves, corselets and brazen shields; the humbler oxhide shields and the darts, bows and arrows of their followers; the chariots drawn up in orderly rows behind each contingent, their horses restively pawing the ground; the bronze swords, worn at the waist, the battle-axes of the same brittle and uncertain metal, the waving plumes of many colours: all made up a scene of great animation and life, on that grave day when Homer opens his tale. Far away in the haze could be seen the craft of the invaders, some at anchor but mostly drawn up on the shore; high-prowed, open boats, mainly propelled by oars, but many large enough to hold a hundred men; many were painted black, others had distinguishing bars of colour, especially in the prows. There were 1300 of these ships of war; but some, it is certain, were always away on exploits that savoured of piracy—raids on inoffensive towns, partly for plunder and partly for food—and which added to the difficulties of the Greeks by inducing the exasperated victims to send help to the beleaguered city. According to the poet, the siege had already endured ten years when our story opens; but this must be a mis-

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take, because no power on earth could have kept so many mutually covetous and quarrelsome Greeks intent on the siege of a single foreign city for more than two or three years at most. Be that as it may, here they were; and they had been here long enough to become discontented and to quarrel over the spoils of their raids on neighbouring towns.

The story of the expedition is a simple one. Paris, the handsome but dissolute son of old Priam, king of Troy, had visited Sparta. During the absence of Menelaus, its king, he fell in love with his beautiful wife Helen; he induced her to fly with him, and at the same time he took (what the king doubtless considered an even greater injury) much of Sparta's treasure as well. In those days, to break the law of hospitality was a deadly sin; but there must have been still stronger motives, to induce Greeks from the most distant parts—people who could have had little or no sympathy with Sparta's troubles—to lend their aid in the punishment of Paris's offence. Probably the chief motives were fear and jealousy; for Troy was undoubtedly a powerful city, well placed to intercept the Greek trade with Asia, and doubtless often clashing with one or other of the pushful city-states in the pursuit of gain. The numerous chieftains had therefore organized this great expedition. Led by Agamemnon, they had sailed hence from Aulis in their 1300 ships, but had hitherto found no means of conquering the city; for they had no engines of war and knew not how to break down the strong brick walls. Troy had been besieged and destroyed before, but by Priam's forethought it had now become so strong that all his enemies could do was to beleague it; yet despite their great numbers they never quite encircled it, and the Trojans came out in sallies, or

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even for pitched battles, whenever they thought fit. Meanwhile, as we have said, the Greeks maintained themselves precariously, and kept alive their interest in the affair, by plunder; and it was out of the plunder from some of these side-shows of the war that the quarrel arose which is the basis of the *Iliad*.

The Greeks had captured two beautiful girls, Chryseis and Briseis; by the vote of the soldiers these prizes were allotted, the former to king Agamemnon and the latter to Achilles. Now, Chryseis was the daughter of a priest, who loved her dearly; and this old man went to the Greek camp before Troy, bearing his religious emblems—a sceptre and a laurel wreath—and humbly asked for her to be restored to him. Agamemnon not only refused, but drove the priest away with savage taunts. The distracted father called down the vengeance of heaven upon the Greeks; and when shortly afterwards a pestilence broke out among them, it was attributed by the soldiers to the king's defiance of the gods. Achilles, already chafing at the length of the siege and disappointed with the plunder, even urged that the expedition should be abandoned before the plague destroyed them all; and he and the other leaders combining, Agamemnon was forced to release his captive. She was sent home by sea with every mark of honour, under the care of Ulysses.

But the angry monarch was not to be so easily thwarted. As his own prize had been wrested from him, he determined to seize another's, and in virtue of his headship ordered that Achilles should yield Briseis to him. Such was the king's power, moreover, that after a violent quarrel Achilles gave up the maiden; but he hurled his sceptre on the ground and swore that neither he nor his people would aid the Greeks again. "By this I swear, when bleeding

Greece again shall call Achilles she shall call in vain." He and his followers then retired to their ships.

Nor was the hero alone in his dissatisfaction; for when Agamemnon, in order to test the temper of his troops before ordering a fresh assault on Troy, suggested that perhaps after all the expedition should be abandoned, he was greeted with cries of approval; and the homesick Greeks, rushing to their ships, began to make ready for sailing. From this they were diverted by old Nestor and other responsible leaders; and it was agreed to give battle to the Trojans who, discerning the retreat, had sallied from the town in force. The impending conflict was delayed, however, by one of those chivalrous single combats which ennobled warfare even down to the days of Marlborough.

Paris, to whose misdeeds the war was ascribed, was a handsome man, who looked well enough as a soldier, whatever his inward parts. Clad in cuirass and helmet, with waving plume, an ample shield, and a panther's hide carelessly slung over all, he stepped out from the Trojan ranks and challenged the Greeks to fight. Instantly Helen's injured husband, Menelaus, sprang down from his chariot and accepted this defiance—so promptly, indeed, that the poor braggart Paris would have fled but for the reproaches of his brother Hector, a noble Trojan who had already covered himself with glory in the siege. Paris then mustered courage to maintain his boast; and while the two armies stood idle—some leaning on their spears, others divested of their armour, the charioteers dismounted—the two kings, Agamemnon and Priam, met in solemn conference, sealed by religious rites; for the Trojans and Greeks were much akin. The monarchs swore that whichever champion won should have both Helen and the treasure that had been stolen with her.

A large space was now enclosed by the spears of both armies, under the direction of Hector and Ulysses; and herein the two combatants prepared for the fight. They drew lots for the right to throw the first javelin. Paris won, but although he hurled his shaft with skill it rebounded from the other's shield and fell blunted to the ground. Now came the Spartan's turn, who made no mistake, his spear crashing right through his enemy's shield and cuirass; the blood spurted out; and Paris, who had dexterously turned aside at the critical instant, fell wounded and fainting. Menelaus sprang forward to give him the finishing stroke; but his sword was as poor as Paris's spear, for it shattered into fragments against the brazen helmet. Mad with rage, the king seized the helpless man by his crest and began to drag him towards the Greek lines; a moment later the helmet came away in his hands, and before he could recover his balance Paris had been spirited away: hauled into the Trojan ranks, he was passed back from man to man and carried into the city.

While the frustrated victor raged and fumed around the arena, his brother Agamemnon stepped forth and demanded that the conditions of the fight be now fulfilled; Paris had fallen, and Helen and the treasure were the Spartan king's by right. He was answered by an arrow from Pandarus, a brave but treacherous chief, who from behind a knot of shields strung his bow at Menelaus and brought him down with a shaft in his ribs. Thereupon many of the Trojans rushed to the attack, and others formed up with the obvious intention of driving the Greeks into the sea. At this crisis Agamemnon, appealing to the gods to punish Troy for her treachery, ran on foot from one contingent to another of his scattered army, encouraging

some, praising others, sternly admonishing the sluggards to fight. They answered him with warlike cries; the *mêlée* became general; many fell or were forced into the river, staining its waters with their blood, and both sides alike struggled fiercely for the mastery.

During this battle Pandarus succeeded in wounding Diomed, one of Agamemnon's chief followers. The injury was slight, but it roused the Greek to fury, and he charged madly about the field, slaying all who opposed his course towards the Trojan archer. Pandarus at this time was riding in the chariot of Æneas. As Diomed approached he flung a spear at him, wounding the Greek for the second time; but an instant later Diomed's own shaft struck him full in the face and he fell from the chariot dead. There ensued a frenzied struggle across his body, for it was a point of honour with both sides to keep the corpses of their own heroes; besides which, the armour of the slain—which was not infrequently golden, and of beautiful craftsmanship—and his weapons were rich prizes for whoever might secure them. Æneas at once pulled up the chariot and drove in circles round and round his dead friend's body; but Diomed, seizing a huge stone, hurled it at him with such violence as to knock him over, and although Æneas was carried off alive, his chariot, his two splendid horses and the remains of Pandarus all fell into the enemy's hands.

The Trojans now for a time prevailed. Their mighty leader Hector, spreading dismay wherever he went, and second as a fighter only to the absent Achilles, beat back the Greeks by voice and example—to such effect indeed that the tired warriors were compelled to form a gigantic ring, entirely surrounded by their foes; in the forefront stood the sternest fighters—the giant Ajax, his namesake Ajax the Less, Diomed,

Ulysses and many others whom Homer names—a band who could not be broken, even by Hector.

At length the battle waned from mutual exhaustion, when an incident occurred which was highly characteristic of the age. The Argive Diomed and a Trojan chief had approached each other in menacing guise; but when each declared his name and purpose, it transpired that their families were connected, for the Trojan, a youth named Glaucus, was the son of an Argive exile. The two there and then swore friendship on the battlefield, and as an earnest exchanged armour; which, as Homer remarks, was a good bargain from Diomed's point of view, his armour being only of brass, whereas his new friend's was of gold!

Meantime, Hector had gone back to the city for reinforcements. Feeling that his own end was near, he sought out his wife Andromache and his infant son, and after a last affecting farewell returned to the field, carrying with him the wounded and reluctant Paris. The latter now shot Menestheus, the Athenian commander; and then Hector challenged the bravest Greek to personal combat—no Paris he, but a foeman worthy of them all. Nine of the Greek leaders drew lots for the honour, and Ajax won. He was a man of muscle rather than brains, gigantic of build and proportionately strong. For defence he bore a huge oxhide shield seven skins thick, with an outer skin of brass; but when the champions advanced to fight, Hector's spear drove truly through it, penetrating six of the seven layers, but hanging by the point in the last. Ajax hurled *his* javelin with greater force, for it pierced both shield and corselet; yet by dexterously bending aside Hector avoided the main force of the blow. Each hero now withdrew the other's dart and charged with it madly at his opponent; again the

strength of Ajax prevailed, for he drove the weapon right through Hector's shield and wounded him slightly in the neck. Nothing daunted, the Trojan stooped down, seized the largest stone he could find, and hurled it at the giant before him; it crashed against his armour and shook him, but Ajax stood firm, and with another stone returned the compliment. Before this unexpected shock Hector went down, only to rise again, still full of fight. Their swords were drawn and they rushed at one another, slashing, stabbing, parrying, with all the skill of practised fencers, till darkness fell and left the combat still unsettled. Meantime, the battle had ceased, and the weary groups of mud- and blood-stained men, leaning on their weapons, encouraged their respective champions, themselves quite loth to fight.

Next day, upon a flag of truce from Priam, hostilities ceased officially, while the bodies of the dead on both sides were collected and burnt, amid religious games and other solemnities. During this truce, which lasted several days, the Greeks, instigated by Nestor, built a strong earthen wall across the plain to defend their fleet. The excavation provided them with a ready-made ditch, which they deepened and protected with stakes; this was to stop the Trojan chariots, of which they had a wholesome fear; but for their own chariots to pass, gates were made at intervals in the wall, flanked by stout wooden towers. At last the astonished Trojans sallied forth again:

*"The gates unfolding pour forth all their train,
Squadrons on squadrons cloud the dusky plain."*

But it was too late. The wall was built, and they found the Greek army drawn up in battle order before it.

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Once again the hostile armies stood toe to toe, shield pressed close to shield, and fought and speared and stabbed, until by sheer weight the attack prevailed, and the Greeks broke and ran behind their rampart; at last the tide had turned! Stray parties were cut off and destroyed; and among these was the venerable Nestor, who had nearly succumbed to a fierce onslaught by Hector and was only carried within the wall by the stout arm of Diomed. The triumphant Trojans now ranged over the whole plain; they kindled watch-fires insultingly near the Greek wall, and Hector set a line of sentinels before it. Hector also ordered the women and old men of Troy to show themselves on the battlements, bearing torches, lest the Greeks should think the town deserted and attempt a surprise against it. Through the dark hours 50,000 men slept uneasily on the plain of Troy; clearly the morrow promised something decisive.

There was no sleep for the Greek chiefs. Agamemnon called a council of war, at which he proposed to retreat to the ships and sail home; but the fiery Diomed scorned this shameful idea, declaring that if necessary he would continue the battle alone, and Nestor supported him. The king was then prevailed upon to appeal to Achilles for help. His emissaries, Ulysses and Ajax, met with a cold reception. Achilles would neither aid them himself nor allow his men to do so; but the wise old Phœnix, who had accompanied the deputation, was retained in his tent and kindly treated—the first sign of Achilles' yielding.

Later the same night, it being vital to learn what the Trojans were about, Diomed and Ulysses went out with a scouting party, who did some damage and even captured one of Hector's spies who had been bound on a similar errand. This success revived the

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fainting courage of the Greeks, and next morning it was resolved to try once again the chance of battle. Agamemnon led his forces into the plain, but the battle rapidly went against them; he himself was wounded early and forced to retire, and despite the heroic efforts of Diomed and Ulysses, both of whom were also wounded, the attack was hurled back again; Ajax alone could even maintain his ground. The Trojan chariots hotly pursued their flying foes and scarcely drew rein till they reached the very edge of the palisaded ditch; here their drivers dismounted and were speedily formed into five separate columns of assault, one for each gate. Hector led the assault, hammering at the wooden gate with a huge stone until it yielded; through the gap thus made he and a mass of Trojans forced an entrance. Many of the Greeks, panic-stricken, fled to their fleet, but the two Ajaxes made a gallant stand, forming their troops into a close and immovable phalanx, against which the human waves battered in vain. The Locrian archers and slingers, too, now poured in an opportune and well-directed hail of missiles, and the Trojans began to waver, but Hector, by voice and deed, beat down all opposition. Darkness fell, a terrible night for the Greeks, with the enemy half inside their fortified line and virtually no hope for the morrow.

Agamemnon now again proposed to retreat, but again the bolder spirits in his council prevailed, though dawn brought fresh disasters. The attack of the Trojans was renewed, a great part of the wall was overthrown, and through the many gaps poured a torrent of armed humanity which nothing could stop. Fighting literally for their existence, the Greeks were carried along by the flood, down to the shore and some of them even into the ships; but when the Trojans,

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carrying lighted torches, endeavoured to set fire to the fleet they were repulsed after a terrible amphibian struggle in the water. Meanwhile the Greeks who had remained on shore were just as desperately engaged in trying to save the tents and baggage.

At this grave crisis a fresh appeal was made to Achilles for help. He himself refused to stir, but it was obvious that the ruin of the main body must be fraught with the gravest consequences to his own contingent. He therefore consented to send his followers—a select band perhaps 2500 strong—under the leadership of his friend Patroclus; and the better to deceive the Trojans, Patroclus was clad in Achilles' well-known and much-dreaded armour.

This reinforcement decided the combat. The Trojans, taken by surprise, and doubtless believing that Achilles, himself a host, was at last among them, quailed, gave way, broke and fled. The retreat became a rout. The shore, the wall, the ditch, were successively abandoned; a horde of fugitives, wounded and sound alike, with broken chariots and flying horses, streamed back behind the bulwark of Troy's stout walls; and the Greeks, who but a short time before had stood between the alternatives of death by the sword, by fire or by drowning, now through the fortune of war again controlled the plain. Hector alone with a few devoted followers, remained outside the walls; thither Patroclus had pursued him, but the Trojan turned and struck him dead. There was a battle-royal over the corpse; but although Hector secured his armour, the body of Patroclus was held by the Greeks and eventually conveyed off the field by Menelaus and the Ajax brothers to the fleet, and the news broken to Achilles. The grief of the sullen chief was deep, not the less so perhaps because he

knew that he himself had sent Patroclus to his death. The moment for a reconciliation was seized. The king restored Briseis unharmed, and Achilles returned to his place in the league. Fresh armour was forged for him in the place of that which Hector now so proudly wore, and Achilles, strengthened within and steeled without, was ready for whatever might transpire.

Thanks no doubt to the Greek inertia, the Trojans regained some of that confidence which had carried them almost into the arms of victory. They essayed another strong sortie; but now the powerful arm and inspiring example of Achilles rendered their best efforts vain, and after a fierce struggle upon the Scamander the Trojans were driven back into the city. Æneas, after being almost killed by Achilles, escaped as if by a miracle, but Hector, whom the deadly hatred of that hero had singled out for vengeance, was less fortunate. Three times round the city's walls did Achilles pursue him, and when at last Hector determined to stand and fight, he knew that his hour had come. Wearing the armour he had captured, and with sword in hand, he flew at the Thessalian, but by a terrific spear-thrust at the spot where neck and throat armour met Achilles pierced them, and the gallant Hector fell dead on the plain, an event so sudden and momentous that all the Greeks crowded round, some to admire the features of him who had been their most dangerous foe, others to jeer at and insult the corpse. Achilles himself behaved in a most unheroic way. He fastened the body by its heels to his chariot, and dragged it completely round the city, amid the lamentations of those who watched from the walls. Soon afterwards Priam himself went to Achilles' tent as a suppliant for his son's body; a request which, now that the Greek's rage had been appeased, was readily granted.

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At this point the *Iliad* ends, but many other legends, which were embodied by Virgil in his *Æneid*, carry on the story to its close. Achilles himself did not long survive his rival, being, as Hector had foretold, killed after an arrow wound in the heel from Paris. In the city resistance continued vigorously; for besides the king and Æneas, his chief counsellor, there were many brave men still willing to stake their all on its fate. The Greeks, ignorant how to overcome the strong walls, hit at last upon a desperate stratagem which showed a shrewd belief in their enemies' credulity.

A huge wooden horse, in which a few of the boldest leaders concealed themselves, was constructed on the plain, in full view of Troy. The Greeks then abandoned both horse and camp, sailing away with much noise, ostensibly for home. They had also allowed a rumour to spread that the horse was a peace offering to ensure them a safe passage across the sea; but to make certain that this rumour reached the right ears, it was arranged for one Sinon to run away from their camp and allow himself to be captured by some shepherds and taken into Troy.

Meanwhile, the astonished Trojans had rushed across the plain to the deserted camp, where they tore up and destroyed everything possible; except only the horse, which nobody dared to touch, lest it should be imbued with magical powers. One man alone, the high priest Laocoon, had the courage to declare that it must be destroyed; but both he and his two sons were attacked soon afterwards by a huge boa constrictor and killed, a fate which the superstitious Trojans ascribed to the anger of the gods at his proposal.

Sinon now comes into the story again. He was

carried in chains before the king, to whom he told a long tale of a quarrel with Ulysses and a hurried flight from a terrible fate that had been designed for him. Artfully, and by degrees, he explained that his compatriots had long desired to return to their homes, being retained at Troy only by fear of Diomed and a few other haughty spirits, and by unfavourable omens. An oracle had demanded that a human sacrifice must be made to the offended gods, and after the quarrel with Ulysses he (Sinon) was destined to be the victim. Miraculously, however, he had escaped.

This story was quite in keeping with the times, and as he appeared to be a genuine deserter his chains were struck off. He was then asked about the mysterious horse. After pretending some nicety about betraying his countrymen's secrets, he declared that the horse was a peace offering to Minerva, whom Diomed and Ulysses had offended by desecrating one of her temples. Its size had been purposely made huge, so as to prevent the Trojans from taking it into Troy; for if they did convey it into the city, the ruin of the Greeks would be assured. The bait was swallowed, hook and all, and it was determined to take in the horse through the wall. The bricks were torn away and the huge machine, painfully dragged through, was hauled in triumph up to the citadel for all to see. Jubilant at having thus made themselves invulnerable, as they thought, the Trojans spent the day in feasting and the succeeding night in the sleep of exhaustion. And if we should feel inclined to smile at such credulity, we must remember that nearly a thousand years afterwards the Romans, a practical-minded people if ever there was one, wanted to break off a sea-fight because the entrails of a fowl were the wrong colour! Those were the days when the gods walked among men, and

people who believed in the gods did so completely.

During this time of suspense the Greek fleet had never been very far away. It went no further than Tenedos, an island twelve miles out, and had subsequently stolen back unseen, the men landing silently in the darkness. There were no sentinels; everybody was drunk or asleep; not a soul gave the alarm, as the host spread itself like a vengeful swarm of ants across the plain. Meanwhile, Sinon had no difficulty in eluding attention. While his new masters were asleep, he stole out to the horse, opened it, and thereby released a formidable band—Agamemnon himself, his brother Menelaus, Ulysses, Pyrrus, who was the son of Achilles, Diomed, and others. While some of these held the way, others ran down, opened the deserted gates and let in their friends, and the Trojans, helpless and distraught, were slaughtered piecemeal as they roused one another in alarm. Of all the Trojan leaders, Æneas alone escaped. Priam, whose palace at the citadel was captured after a desperate resistance, perished while trying to protect his young son from Pyrrhus. Naturally, but unwisely, he accused Pyrrhus of being an unworthy son of so great a father, since he sought to murder a defenceless youth; when Pyrrhus bid him join Achilles in the shades and tell him so, at the same time savagely stabbing the old king to death. Helen was carried off by the triumphant Greeks. Fire and massacre laid the city in ruins, and thus it remained a wilderness for many centuries. So ended the memorable if legendary Siege of Troy.

CHAPTER II

The Siege of Tyre

Nearly a thousand years after these events a young man of three-and-twenty walked a very spirited white horse up and down the Palestine shore. His bright eye and proud bearing, the fineness of his linen, and the splendid chasing on his brilliantly polished armour betokened a person of no mean condition; as did the knot of horsemen—heavily armed, with golden helmets, glittering breastplates and greaves, and themselves obviously leaders of men—who followed him at a respectful distance, stopping when he stopped, wheeling when he wheeled, and mute until he deigned to notice them.

Not far from this party stood a range of dilapidated brick buildings, flat-roofed, dirty and partly buried beneath the sand, about which lounged a few dull-witted slaves, pariah dogs and filthy children. This was Old Tyre. On the grassy plain surrounding this brick desert like a green sea had been neatly laid out the lines of a large camp, wherein some 30,000 men were at this moment moving hither and thither in busy disorder, having in fact only just taken up their quarters for a protracted stay. Every now and then the young horseman paused to glance seawards at an islet about a mile off, hidden by the roofs of houses and fronted by a glaring white wall, the islet of New Tyre, and then, with a frown, resumed his ride.

Despite his boyish appearance, there was an air of majesty about him which did not invite interruption; he looked, and indeed was, "every inch a king"—one moreover of athletic figure, inured to fatigue and war, and himself capable of essaying anything to which he should command his followers.

This young man was Alexander of Macedon, soon to be known as Alexander the Great; he claimed descent from Hercules, who had sacked Troy before Priam's time, and the spirit of the old Greek heroes surged through the young king's brain. It was coupled, moreover, with a military skill which they never had. For more than a century ill-feeling had reigned between the Greek city-states and the huge, sprawling Persian Empire, an oriental despotism that stretched from the Dardanelles to India and from the Caspian to the sands of Egypt. First the Greeks and then the Macedonians had divined that their enemy, rich as Croesus, was by no means correspondingly powerful, and Alexander, now the head of a Macedonian and Greek army of 30,000 men, had carried out his late father's plans by invading Asia Minor. At the extreme point of the Mediterranean, where the road into Syria runs down by the sea, penned in between the mountains and the shore, the Persian monarch Darius had hastened to meet him, with an army ten times more numerous. Foolishly the Persians had allowed themselves to enter the narrow valley of Issus, where their immense numbers were of no avail. There, attacked by the celebrated Macedonian phalanx and the still more deadly light cavalry under Alexander himself, they had been utterly destroyed. The Persian king fled to the safety of remote Irak; his mother, his wife, and his children fell into the hands of the conqueror, who treated them with marked consideration.

An immense booty was captured, and shortly afterwards, by a sudden dart across the desert to Damascus, Alexander secured another vast treasure. To follow his enemy into Mesopotamia and Persia proper, however, was by no means his present intention, for he combined extraordinary speed of action with the caution of a born general; and he determined first to impress his power upon the Mediterranean cities which might otherwise cut his army off from its source of supplies in Greece. Accordingly, he had marched down the coast, receiving the submission of city after city, until at last he reached Tyre, a town which admitted no master and feared no foe.

There is no doubt that Alexander's keen eye had long rested on this place. It was the focus and forefront of Phœnician independence, only nominally subject to Persia. True, its fleet was cruising in the Mediterranean under a Persian admiral, but if the city could be overawed the fleet would become a valuable adjunct to the Macedonians, who had no fleet of their own. He therefore sent a message to Tyre, announcing his intention of entering the island-city in order to sacrifice there at the shrine of his ancestor Hercules. The Tyrians, who knew that once Alexander's soldiers had crossed the strait freedom would be at an end, refused the specious demand; secure in the strength of their walls, the wildness of the winter storms in the neighbouring sea, and the fact that they had once defied the mighty Nebuchadnezzar for thirteen years, they refused to be intimidated now by a mere stripling, who lacked even the means of approaching the town. But their defiance was subtly worded. They sent Alexander a golden wreath, with a supply of provisions for his troops; pointed out that there was a much more ancient and honourable temple to Hercules

in the ruined town on the mainland, and unmistakably implied that neither Alexander nor his people would be permitted to enter New Tyre.

Alexander was intensely irritated. His career had been so invariably all-conquering that the very breath of opposition aroused in him a fighting instinct; he knew besides how perilous it would be if, having once demanded the right to enter Tyre, he should allow himself to be refused, for what guarantee was there then that they would not molest his communications with Greece, besides stirring up all the cities that were at present so subservient, into a fatal hostility to the foreign invader? Again, he had never brooked and never could brook throughout his wonderful career the idea of defeat. The more hazardous, difficult, and seemingly impossible the enterprise, the more would be the glory of achieving it, and Alexander lived for glory alone. He therefore sent back the messengers of Tyre, saying that if it were not opened to him he would raze it with the ground and hang all its people on the shore. But now that he had actually reached the place, and had seen the difficulties with his own very practical eye, he was less certain; he had even treated his staff to a long harangue on the pros and cons of the enterprise. Hence his long and anxious cogitation as he rode up and down the strand, before finally committing himself to a venture which, though it could not help him much, yet might conceivably ruin everything.

Tyre was separated from the mainland by three-quarters of a mile of sea, shallow and muddy near the continent, but deep and swift-flowing round the island, where it broke on a rocky shore. On the north and south sides of the island, facing Sidon and Egypt respectively, were two fine harbours, with stout

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masonry breakwaters, and capable of being closed by chains across the entrances. On the mainland side a huge wall, white and gleaming, and of vast thickness, rose to the height of 150 feet; it sank rapidly towards the harbours (where the land was so low that a canal ran from one harbour to the other), but rose again on the seaward side, where it was also fringed by rocks. Within this wall were clustered thickly the houses of the citizens, the merchants, dye-makers, fishermen and rulers of Tyre; many of the buildings were two or three storeys high, for the narrow bounds of the island held 40,000 souls. Tyre was the mother of Carthage, a great African city now in its prime, and it was hoped, not unreasonably, that the Carthaginians would come to her aid, although in fact they did very little. But the city's best ally was the weather, for at all seasons north-westerly storms were liable to sweep down that unprotected coast, burying the island in mist and driving white horses in furious succession through the narrow channel. In the small ships of that age even experienced seamen dreaded these nor'-westers; how much more deadly, then, would they prove to Alexander, who had no navy at all worth mentioning!

The king himself had doubts about the wisdom of his undertaking, for before commencing operations he sent a final summons to the city to surrender. His heralds were seized by the enraged islanders, bound, and forced out on the battlements where, in sight of the whole Macedonian army, they were put to death and their bodies hurled into the sea, a savage act which admitted of but one answer. Orders were given immediately to build out from the shore a solid causeway or mole, upon which, so soon as it should reach the island, Alexander intended to erect battering rams,

dart-slingers and catapults, and so to reduce the proud city to submission. Two lines of stout wooden piles were driven into the sea, and the space between them, two hundred feet wide, was filled with earth, stones and rubbish of every description from the ruined town. While some soldiers filled their shields with this stuff, others were cutting wood, yet others foraging far and near to keep the army supplied with food.

At first the Tyrians regarded the mole with contempt, but as it steadily progressed seawards they began to interrupt it, by a series of sharp attacks. There were crowds of small boats in the harbour; and these were rowed across on cut-and-run expeditions, the occupants assailing the Macedonians with a shower of missiles and then withdrawing beyond range again. This annoyance at length became so persevering that Alexander erected wooden frames along the sides of the mole, like skeleton hoardings, on which he hung sails and hides as a more or less efficient shield behind which his men could work. When this device proved inadequate, he erected two large wooden towers at the outer angles of the mole, on which dart- and stone-slinging engines were placed, so as to bombard the enemy's craft from a distance, and as the mole advanced into the sea the towers were moved out with it. Nevertheless, week after week slipped away; the twin spectres of disease and famine made their appearance, and the strip of green water between the mole and the fortress walls was still discouragingly wide. The farther the works advanced, too, the more difficult it became to protect them from storms; for a constant succession of breakers dashed upon the mole, and but for the stout piles it must inevitably have been washed away.

The Tyrians, however, viewed its growth with

serious alarm, and they planned a simultaneous double attack by night upon it. A large boat was filled with oil and other combustibles. She had two masts, from the pitching yardarms of which large cans of oil were suspended; the uneasy motion of the boat sprayed this substance over all the vicinity. As soon as a favourable wind arose, this fireship was taken across to the mole-head and ignited; her crew sprang overboard and swam back to Tyre; and before the Macedonians could board the vessel she had run the length of the mole-head, spilling flaming oil upon it and setting it alight from end to end. Fiery tongues ran up the dry timber of the towers like lightning, and even if it had been possible to save them amid the darkness and confusion, no man thought of aught but protecting himself; thus the structures were speedily reduced to charred and smoking ruins. Meanwhile pandemonium had broken out at the other end of the mole, where a party of Tyrians who had landed unseen were trying to tear up the piles and let in the sea upon the loose earth within. Another party, lying offshore in large ships with glowing braziers, poured a hail of red-hot arrows on works and defenders alike; and it was not until Alexander, who had been camped at some distance, himself came up and by voice and deed led the charge which hurled the islanders back into the sea, that the attack could be beaten off. But it was now too late, for the cold morning light disclosed an utter wreck where the works had stood so stoutly only the night before. To complete the tale of misfortune, a furious gale sprang up; waves smashed one after another on the damaged piles, wrenching and bursting them asunder, then swept in irresistibly and burst the back of the mole, which simply melted away. Thus the labour of months had been destroyed

in a few hours, and Tyre, insolent and jubilant, seemed as unassailable as ever.

Alexander's plight was now serious. He had to maintain a considerable and discouraged army in a desert land, by forced requisitions from the unwilling cities which had acknowledged his yoke; while at the same time he had to procure materials for the siege from an area that every day grew more remote. The effect of his great victory at Issus was waning; many among the Phœnicians who watched so keenly must have thought that his doom was certain. But Alexander never abandoned an enterprise to which he had once set his hand, and such was still his influence over his turbulent chiefs and their equally unruly followers that when he ordered the mole to be begun anew they obeyed at once, though doubtless not without sighing at his obstinacy. The mole was now built on more generous lines, both wider and stronger, for all knew that another such storm as the last would ruin the enterprise. A constant procession of horse transports dragged down trunks and branches of forest trees from Mount Lebanon, nearly fifty miles away, and this timber, weighted with stones, was flung into the sea to form a new embankment. The Tyrians meanwhile were not idle. On every favourable night they sent out ships with divers aboard, who swam to the wall, tied ropes and chains to the trunks, and dived away again into the blackness; then, as the ships were rowed seawards, they pulled after them slices of the wall and so let the sea in again. Despite everything, however, the work progressed. Every point which could be assailed was protected by guards. The towers were rebuilt. The long line of sails and hides floated gaily in the wind anew. And in the end the mole crept out towards the island with a terrifying certainty.

But it was clear to the king that such methods alone were too risky; one more storm, one more night attack by fireships, and everything might be ruined; only a fleet could give him security. His trusty generals, Perdiccas and Craterus, were left in charge of the siege, while he himself, taking only a small escort of chosen horsemen, rode over to the neighbouring city of Sidon. There the terror of his name, coupled with the long-standing hatred and jealousy which Sidon had of Tyre, procured for him the aid of the Sidonian fleet, besides a number of ships from neighbouring ports, the whole amounting to eighty vessels. He also received the invaluable aid of a further 120 ships from Cyprus, another commercial rival of the dreaded city; for so short-sighted were these people that they cared not what master they served so long as hated Tyre was humbled. Adding to these new resources the equally welcome reinforcement of 4000 Greek foot-soldiers under Cleander, Alexander now felt able to attack Tyre on her own element, and he led the combined fleets back to the island in battle array, himself characteristically taking the dangerous seaward station. To resist so great a force seemed hopeless, nor did the Tyrians attempt it, but prudently withdrew within their harbours, where they lay secure behind a barrier of chains. Having stationed the Cypriot fleet off the northern harbour and left his other allies to watch the southern, Alexander landed at the mole; it had grown steadily during his absence, and now but a short space of open water lay between his eager engineers and the walls. At last even this gap was reduced to a few feet, through which the water slowly gurgled, and now great movable wooden towers as high as an average church steeple were hauled and shoved to the very edge by perspiring crowds of soldiers, regardless

of the arrows and stones thrown down from above. These towers had several storeys, with archers on one floor, stone-slinging machines on another, but their chief armament was a stout wooden battering-ram, with an iron head, by means of which it was hoped to break down the wall. The whole was protected by hides that had been soaked in vinegar to render them non-combustible; against this defence even red-hot arrows and balls of burning tinder made no impression. But no sooner were the rams set to work, with their tremendous sonorous blows, than the besieged almost nullified their effect, by hanging down great balls of seaweed and other soft stuff, which broke the force of the blow, and when the Macedonian archers began to pick off the men who held the ropes they were met with an equally steady fire in reply. Great pans of sand were also heated in braziers on the battlements, and the contents, shot out from slings, descended in a fiery shower on the unhappy men below, penetrating every chink of their armour and causing unendurable agony. The attack had to be withdrawn and the towers removed out of reach, while the wall, the object of all this herculean labour, remained smooth, grinning white, and almost unbreached.

The king now resorted to more hazardous modes of attack, at first without success. He called in many vessels of the fleet and had them assembled in pairs, with the prows tied together and the sterns wide apart; upon this unsteady foundation planks were laid, and small rams, catapults and dart-throwers were built up on the platform. These extraordinary craft, crowded with landing parties, then set forth for the island, but they had not gone far before a sudden squall sprang up, which speedily became a gale. In vain did they try either to steer forwards or

backwards; orders were lost in that howling wind as soon as uttered; the ships became quite unmanageable; many crashed into their consorts, others overturned and drowned their crews; chaos reigned supreme. At last a mere remnant of the flotilla regained the mainland, exhausted and dispirited.

Despite this unhappy beginning, Alexander tried the same device again, this time in fair weather, and with more success, but although he succeeded at last in breaching the wall near the southern harbour, it was only after well-nigh incredible exertions. The Tyrians rolled great stones down the beach and sunk them off the wall, so that the ships could not get alongside sufficiently close for the rams to act, and when the Macedonians had laboriously removed most of these obstructions, the enemy's divers swam out at night and cut the cables by which the vessels were moored. The current then carried the ships away, nor could they be secured against this menace until the king had obtained iron chains with which to anchor them.

Meanwhile there had been a couple of desperate naval fights. The Cypriot fleet, conscious perhaps of its huge size and strength, was negligent. The Tyrians noticed the fact and sent out thirteen of their fastest ships, manned by picked crews; these suddenly ran down upon the enemy, sank many of their vessels, and threw the others into great confusion. Alexander was sent for, but as soon as he arrived, leading the rest of the fleet, the Tyrians made good their escape into the harbour. A second sally was less successful, for the enemy were prepared this time, and the Tyrians were driven back with heavy loss.

The critical moment now arrived when a general assault was to be ordered. All parts were to be attacked

at once. The fleets were to force their way into both harbours. A choice band was to assail the new-made breach. Alexander himself, at the head of another, was to attempt the high wall. No secrecy could conceal the preparations for these attacks, and the citizens, well aware what was in store for them if beaten, redoubled their watchfulness; they even barricaded the streets, so as to have means of carrying on the fight if driven from the walls. But neither courage nor skill could avail them any longer; the curses of the prophets against Tyre were about to be fulfilled.

We do not know where the first blow fell; probably it was from the fleets, which on both sides forced the harbour entrances, yet without at once effecting a landing. Meanwhile, swift rowers had carried out the Macedonian infantry to the breach, where they sprang upon the slippery rocks. Admetus, a friend of the king, was the first ashore and first to mount the breach; he fell back, mortally wounded by a pike-thrust, but his comrades gained some footing there and steadily enlarged it. At the same time the giant towers had been thrust against the wall farther along; a drawbridge was lowered, and over it the human freight poured, led by Alexander himself, conspicuous by his bright armour and his unsullied plume. There was a short, sharp struggle at the parapet, but the terrible phalanx—a solid mass of highly-trained spearmen, row behind row, all shoving forward as one—was not to be resisted. The ramparts once gained, the whole space between the two towers which flanked them was rapidly cleared. In that instant Alexander became master of Tyre, for the citizens, unskilled at hand-to-hand fighting, and undisciplined, yielded, broke and fled. The towers were both carried by assault, and the victors, streaming down into the

town, met their comrades who had penetrated the harbour and the breach; together they poured on, overbearing all obstacles.

There now commenced a great and indiscriminate slaughter. Six thousand citizens had fallen upon the walls alone; many more were destroyed in the streets. One stout body made a stand in the Temple of Agenor, but it could not hold the torrent and was destroyed there to the last man. The chief citizens, together with ambassadors from Carthage and many women and children, had taken refuge in the Temple of Hercules; here they were surrounded, but by Alexander's order were unharmed. Out in the town, thousands who had escaped the sword were reserved for a fate still more dreadful; for the conqueror, with a view to striking terror into any other city which might dispute his will, had two thousand of them crucified along the shore. This was a barbarous act, quite in keeping with the darker side of Alexander's strange character. Yet more remains to tell. Thirty thousand women and children were sold into slavery. The great walls were levelled with the ground, the great buildings tumbled into ruin, but not before the king, true to his vow, had solemnly marched into the place at the head of his army, and carried out the farce of a religious celebration at the Temple of Hercules.

So fell Tyre, a city which, whatever it had done to earn hatred before, had in nowise offended the Macedonians other than by being on their line of march and by desiring a reasonable measure of independence; its citizens slaughtered and its very existence wiped out merely to satisfy a tyrant's vanity. Its conquest by Alexander, regarded as a military feat, was an achievement of the highest order, but as a moral act it was an outstanding disgrace.

CHAPTER III

The Crusaders at Acre

The time changes, but not the place. Fifteen hundred years have passed since Tyre's great walls crashed down in ruins, and again we see on that unhappy coast the clash of armies, but armies now of a very different stamp—clouds of fierce, turbaed Arabs and 'Turks disputing the country with solid masses of mail-clad Crusaders. It is the 28th August, 1189, a bright, calm day when the soft sea breeze tempers the intense heat of the sandy shore. The citizens of Acre, a busy port only twenty-five miles from Tyre, have been called to the walls and mosques by the strident tones of the alarm-bell. They form a motley crowd: the prince, with fine white robe and jewelled scimitar, the ragged boor leaning on his spear, the fierce, unwashed seaman (pirate and trader by turn, as opportunity offers), the curious maid whose anxious eyes glance timidly from above her veil, the child of the town, in every state of dirt and undress down to complete nakedness; all alike crowd to the walls to gaze upon an approaching dust-cloud. Is it a friend or an enemy? The sun glistens and sparkles on something among the dust; then, as the cavalcade draws nearer, one can clearly discern the glint of steel and a banner marked by a huge red cross. "Islam, it is an enemy! Shut the gates, sentinels, and drive the women and children indoors; and do you, bold horseman, ride like the wind with the news to our

mighty master Saladin; for the accursed Christians are upon us!" So opens the Siege of Acre, a drama in which East and West grapple to the death for two long years, with very little ultimate advantage to either.

The cause of the war was a religious difference so deep that time could not heal nor blood bridge it. Five hundred years earlier, Mahomet's conquering hordes had overswept the land like locusts, fastening upon Jerusalem, and because of its associations with the Prophet the Holy City had become as sacred to Moslems as it was to the Christians. There were constant clashes, and since the Arab power prevailed, the Christians had to suffer. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem—which in those deeply religious days were particularly sacred acts—were hindered or stopped, and the opportune combination of a strong-willed Pope and a fiery wandering priest brought about a Europe-wide movement to free the Holy Land from the Turk. This was the First Crusade. It had burnt itself out in fire and blood just ninety years before our scene opens, with the Turks abashed and a Crusader crowned King of Jerusalem. Subsequently there had been quarrels over the spoils, for the unruly and undisciplined knights would acknowledge no master for long, and each schemed for his own advantage. The object of the Crusades was forgotten in the intrigues of the victors, the armies became mere plundering bands, and the Turks, recovering courage, began to regain the ascendancy, until, under the wise and brilliant leadership of Saladin, a Saracen who comported himself like a king, and who did many noble and generous deeds, they had again become completely predominant. Guy de Lusignan, the reigning king, had been captured; Jerusalem had fallen once more; Acre itself,

the port of entry for most Christians into the Holy Land, had surrendered to the Turks without a blow, and the affairs of the Cross were in such evil plight that a new Crusade had been proclaimed, an enterprise in which the kings of France and England, the Emperor of Germany, the Duke of Austria, the Count of Flanders, with all their attendant lords, knights and squires of the feudal world, were engaged. Bishops, and even archbishops, abandoned the crosier for the sword and now rode a charger with as much skill as they had formerly bestrode the episcopal donkey. Part of the great expedition went overland and part by sea, but the leaders had so many other objects besides a Crusade, and they stopped so long on the way, for intrigues or minor wars of their own, that the siege of Acre was undertaken long before the greater part of the intended assailants were within a thousand miles of the place.

Acre lies at the northern end of a wide, open bay, ten miles from Carmel, a finger-like projection of the land forming a natural but very insecure harbour. This was fortified, and had at its southern end the famous Tower of Flies, so called because the sandpit on which it was built had been the scene of many sacrifices in ancient days, when the winged pests were very conspicuous. From the Tower of Flies to the shore a stout chain was stretched. The town, an insignificant mass of flat-roofed hovels, with a mosque or two and the more commodious quarters of the Christian societies, was protected by a strong double wall, with numerous towers, the whole being surrounded by a moat. Dominating the defences was a larger tower than the rest, known of old as the Cursed Tower, because there (so legend ran) the silver had been coined for which Judas betrayed Christ. South

of the town ran a shallow stream, beyond which one or two low hills stretched towards the mountain mass of Carmel and Lebanon, and on the east was a fertile plain.

The city had been but a year in the hands of the Turks, and its recapture was regarded as of the greatest moment, because it contained quarters of the two most powerful Christian societies in Palestine, the Knights Templars and the Knights Hospitallers. In fact, however, Tyre, which was strongly held by Conrad, Marquis of Montferrat, would have served the Crusaders equally well.

We have said that when Jerusalem fell king Guy was imprisoned by Saladin. He had now been released, however, on giving a solemn promise to leave the country and never to return; a promise which it was not beneath his honour to break immediately. He had gone to Antioch, where he had collected about 700 knights and 9000 foot. With this small army he determined to attempt the recapture of Acre, without waiting for the succour which he knew to be on the way from England, Germany and France. When he reached Tyre, he tried to enlist Conrad's aid, but that crafty baron (who himself had a claim to the crown of Jerusalem and was by no means minded to assist his rival) refused. Guy then went on to Acre, where he established his headquarters south of the town, on a hill called Mount Tuon. The ground between his camp and the sea was occupied by a detachment of Pisans, who entrenched themselves, but the other side was entirely open, the Saracens passing in and out at will.

A first hurried assault before the walls had been battered at all was manfully thrown back, and then, while the Christians more firmly established themselves,

bands of Saracens rapidly began to assemble on a hill in their rear, the black standard of Saladin himself was hoisted, and the Crusaders found themselves enclosed between an active foe within the town and the speedy horsemen of their equally dangerous enemy without. Fortunately, at this time the sails of a fleet were desiered approaching; it proved to be 12,000 English, Danes and Flemings. Soon there followed doughty leaders, including James of Avesnes and the martial Bishop of Beauvais; even Conrad was at last induced to lend his aid. By mid-September the army numbered 9000 horse and 30,000 foot, and was strong enough to blockade the place completely. The Turks thereupon made a determined attempt to break through on both sides at once, and despite stiff resistance the Christians were forced aside while supplies of food passed into the city.

Three weeks later it was decided to drive Saladin off. A mass attack was made upon his camp, led by the infantry; their ranks suddenly opened, however, as the Saracens were preparing to receive them, and the heavily armoured horse swept out, and, charging up the hill, dispersed the enemy. At once all order was lost, for the Crusaders, more mindful of plunder than victory, began to scatter in search of loot; they had even reached Saladin's tent and had cut its guy-ropes, when they were recalled to the fight by a terrible shock. A strong body of Turks had sallied unperceived from Acre, and falling upon their rear, had cut them off from their own army. Saladin's men rallied, and the Crusaders, among whom were many Templars, were cut to pieces; even the fiercest efforts with the battle-axe and huge two-handed sword could not prevail against the more lightly armed but vastly more agile Turks. Gerard de Riddeford, Grand Master of the

Order, was slain in the mêlée; bravely replying, when he was recommended to fly, "God forbid that men should say of me to the shame of our Order that to save my own life I fled away, leaving my fellows dead behind me!" Others were less worthy. The Count de Brienne put spurs to his horse, disregarding the call for help of his own brother, who had fallen wounded, while Avesnes fled on a borrowed steed, the owner of which was killed almost immediately afterwards. Guy himself was in great danger, and was rescued only by the timely intervention of his enemy Conrad.

After this disastrous day the Crusaders confined themselves largely to their own ground, while the bulk of the foot and the camp followers were ordered to dig a trench and raise a mound round their position on Saladin's side, toiling incessantly until it was finished. So great and self-evident had the need for this become that, says the chronicler, a woman who had been mortally wounded by a Turkish dart implored her husband to fling her dead body into the mound, so that in death she might further the object for which she had given her life. But even when finished, the trench afforded no security. It was repeatedly attacked, especially by bands of gigantic men, wearing red caps and carrying clubs headed with iron spikes, which neither helmet nor mail could keep out; wave after wave of these savage warriors advanced to the very edge of the trench, only to perish there.

Meanwhile hunger had made itself felt, both within and without the camp, for both sides relied now upon provisions brought by sea, and there were constant battles for the scant arrivals of foodships. The Christian vessels could not brave the constant storms by lying off Acre, but had to base on Tyre, twenty-five miles away; Saladin was thus enabled repeatedly to

send supplies into the town from Egypt. Sometimes the two fleets met. They were both composed of galleys, long, broad-waisted ships with two banks of oars, which were manœuvred so as to strike the enemy amidships and sink him, but when the oars became entangled, as frequently happened, the boldest men in either ship would leap on to the other's deck, axe or sword in hand, and fight it out to the bitter end.

During the winter the army was set to work at building three huge wooden towers or siege castles, each of which overtopped the walls and held 500 men. These great machines, which ran on wheels, were protected by tarpaulins and hides against fire, so little had the art advanced since Alexander's day! Against the siege castles the Turks used powerful stone-casters, the projectiles from which struck their victims like shell fragments and were hurled with such force as to drive the stones a foot into the ground. Many similar weapons were of course used by the Crusaders, while the men in the tops of the towers could look down on the parapet and with arrow and arbalest (a kind of dart-thrower) bring down the enemy even in the streets of the town. The Turks found this attack so galling that they offered to surrender on condition that they were allowed to depart, but the offer was refused and the siege castles were laid alongside the walls. At this crisis a young charcoal burner mixed masses of combustible stuff which was thrown against the towers; on being lighted, the dry timber rapidly became a raging furnace. While the assailants were vainly trying either to extinguish the flames, or to get the castles away from the wall, Saladin's men made a violent assault on the camp from without, and in the confusion of the fight that followed the great engines were completely destroyed. Neverthe-

less, fresh towers were built, one even being erected on ships and towed to the Tower of Flies, but on each occasion the Turks succeeded in burning them, though only after a desperate fight.

Again the siege languished, and bitter was the complaint of the soldiery while their leaders allowed the long summer days to slip away without any fresh enterprise. Saladin felt so secure that he sent a large part of his army to Antioch, an act which brought about a fresh disaster to the Christian cause. The soldiers noted the feeble defence of the camp and decided to attack it, ignoring their leaders' warnings and even the sternest orders, in the mad desire for loot and destruction. Without any definite form of battle, they swarmed up to the Saracen lines, swept away the opposition, and penetrating among the tents began to steal or destroy everything they could lay hands on. But the Saracens, who had perhaps withdrawn by a mere ruse, now returned in great strength; the plunderers were caught red-handed and unprepared, and with scarcely a struggle, running helplessly from place to place, 5000 of them were cut down. Nothing but the heavy reinforcements from the sea which were frequently coming in could counteract such losses as these.

During the lull, the plain of Acre might have been a circus rather than a battlefield. A tournament was held, to which even the chief Arab leaders were invited! There were individual combats, too, carried out on both sides with all the forms of martial chivalry, and trials of archery, one at least of which had a fatal result. A Parthian bowman and a Welshman agreed to shoot at each other in turn. The Parthian aimed first and missed, but when it was his turn to stand still and be shot at, he refused, and said, "No, you

must stand another shot and then have two at me." For reply, the Welshman bitterly reproved him for his lack of faith, and drawing his bow in the same instant, drove his arrow completely through the other's body.

Matters now went from bad to worse. The plain became so unhealthy that the Saracens withdrew to the mountains, but their enemies, riddled with plague, dysentery and malaria, were compelled by their situation to remain herded together before the fatal town. Their vast numbers, which exceeded 100,000, were their own undoing. Food for such a multitude could not be procured at any price, and supplies from the sea were small and uncertain. The horses—invaluable in a war against such well-mounted foes—were slaughtered as the need arose, and fabulous prices were paid even for the meanest and most nauseous parts. If a little bread was baked, there was a riot to secure the loaves. If any prudent warrior had a small stock he had to eat it unscen, otherwise it would have been taken from him by force. Many of the poorer men, and even some of the barons, were compelled to gather and cook the wayside weeds. Under such conditions of hunger and disease, the troops abandoned themselves to every licence. They had not long to live, they said; therefore, they would make merry while they could. From an army of the Cross it had become, as the bishops said, an army of the devil. The scandal was so great that it broke the heart of poor old Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and killed him. Much of their evil plight was attributed by the soldiers to Conrad of Montferrat, who had retired once more to Tyre, and who would send them nothing—"not even an egg," says Geoffrey de Vinsauf, who was there. Some desperate souls even

went over to the Turkish camp and turned musselman, because there they were at least sure of half a meal. But at last, one fateful day in March, a small ship loaded with grain reached the port, and from that day things began to improve; meanwhile, however, Saladin had succeeded in introducing another garrison into Acre.

Soon after Easter Philip Augustus, King of France, a crafty and vainglorious man, arrived with many knights and new engines of destruction; one month later Richard the Lion-Heart landed from England, having spent nearly two years on the way in settling his private quarrels. He also had a great array of besieging machines, and had brought besides a supply of large smooth flints from Sicily, which his stone-casters hurled to a prodigious distance. One of these dreadful missiles once killed a dozen men.

The new machines were speedily mounted, the French and English working with feverish energy and in more or less friendly rivalry. Day after day, night after night, the walls were pounded, especially near the Accursed Tower, but at first without any practical result. Philip had one most powerful stone-caster, which he called "The Bad Neighbour", but the Saracens went one better with another, "The Bad Kinsman", with which they smashed it, although it was repeatedly repaired. The French king also invented a huge wickerwork frame, covered with skins, to protect the men who were working beneath the walls; it was called "The Cat", because it could be hooked up on any rough surface and would hang there. The Turks tried Greek Fire on this, with fatal results. Philip likewise had a small frame made, beneath which he sat down against the wall and picked off Turkish soldiers with his arbalest but the enemy burnt this too. The enraged king then ordered an assault of the

Accursed Tower, despite Richard's protests that it was not yet time. The French ran forward, the ditch was filled, up went the scaling ladders, and desperate efforts were made to gain the ramparts. Some ladders were overturned and crashed with their living burden forty feet below. Some had boiling liquids hurled upon them. The foremost files were assailed by a cloud of arrows and darts; nevertheless, with great bravery the French did gain the ramparts, when the Turks, by a frenzied and superhuman effort, charged them back and cast them down to destruction. Further efforts met with no better result. One bold hero, Alberic Clements, swore that he would enter Acre, alone if need be, or perish; he mounted a ladder, but was immediately borne down on the parapet, killed, and stripped of his armour. Some days later Richard of England saw from below the man who was wearing this armour and with a well-aimed dart avenged the Frenchman.

Meanwhile, the English, spurred on by their king's offer of rich rewards, had been systematically attacking the wall near the base of the tower. They filled up the moat with earth, and then dug out stones one by one from the base of the wall; into the holes wooden blocks were set, which, on being fired, loosened the masonry, and the wall, and even the tower, tottered. Now began a still more furious bombardment with heavy stones and rams of every kind, until at last the wall crashed in ruins. A breach was made! During all this time Richard, whose natural instincts led him to be first in every assault, had been lying prostrate with fever; nevertheless, he had himself carried out to the wall, and from his bed shot down many of the defenders. It was 9th July, 1191, nearly two years after the commencement of this fatal siege; everything

was set for the final drama, when a white flag slowly fluttered above the Turkish wall. They begged for a truce. Saladin, whose efforts to create a diversion had failed, now proposed that they should make the best terms they could. They were still strong and dangerous, steeled in every expedient and device of war, while the Crusaders were torn by their own jealousies, French against English, Guy against Conrad, and were besides heartily sick of the siege. After some haggling, it was agreed that the Turks should surrender the town and all their arms, but should leave unmolested. Saladin was to pay 200,000 talents of silver. More than 2500 Christian captives of every condition were to be released. These things being arranged, the gates were opened, and Richard and Philip marched in at the head of their knights, the Lion of England and the Lily of France side by side, followed by the countless banners of their troops. Each of the principals in the army occupied one section of the city, erecting his standard there, but in all the brief joy of conquest there was one bitter taste. Leopold Duke of Austria had done very little towards the victory, and when his standard was hoisted on the wall, it was taken down again by Richard's order (or with his connivance) and hurled into the ditch.

CHAPTER IV

The Siege of Orleans

This is the story of how the courage and resolute will of a simple peasant girl transformed the history of two great nations by taking the crown of one from the king of the other; a feat without parallel, for which she was abandoned by those whom she had made powerful, that she might be burnt by those whom she had shamed; the story, in a word, of how Joan of Arc saved Orleans.

The year 1428 was drawing to its close, a year full of bitter memories for all friends of France; for that country, writhing under the twofold horror of civil war and foreign invasion, was fast sinking into a mere colony of the hated English. Only thirteen years before, the fatal battle of Agincourt had dispersed her nobles and had firmly established the claim of Henry V to her crown. True, the great king himself was now dead, but his infant son, Henry VI, had been crowned in Paris, and the reins of state were wielded by one of the most astute of men, the regent Duke of Bedford. The French had not even an opposition king, for the heir to their throne, the Dauphin Charles, was a dissolute, idle and treacherous youth, uncrowned and with no likelihood of ever becoming so. He had caused one of the greatest of his nobles, the Duke of Burgundy, to be assassinated, and had thereby brought the whole of the murdered nobleman's followers into armed revolt against him, and then the French

barons (who were petty kings in their way) had sided some with Burgundy and others with Charles, as their interests and jealousies dictated. Meanwhile, the rapacious hands of the English soldiery had grasped one-half of France and seemed destined speedily to seize the other. The English numbered but a few thousands, yet they were all veterans of war, and were led by bold captains who knew neither defeat nor fear; the archers were so skilful that before their terrible longbows all the armoured might of France had melted away time and time again. As the war drifted southwards, towards those central provinces which were all that remained of France, it became painfully clear to both sides that a struggle must take place at Orleans, the last great stronghold of French power north of the Loire. The situation of Orleans was peculiar, in that its duke and natural protector had been a prisoner in England since Agincourt; but his natural son, the young lord Dunois, who possessed both courage and skill, had for some time been strengthening the fortifications in preparation for a siege. He found in the governor, the *Sieur de Gaucourt*, a willing helper; besides such of the French nobles—the brave but ruffianly *La Hire*, for instance—who had not altogether despaired of their country's fortunes. Thus when the English approached the city in October of that year, 1428, they met with an unexpectedly warm reception.

Orleans lies upon the north bank of the wide and shallow Loire. It was defended by a strong wall having no fewer than thirty-four towers. A bridge led to an island in mid-stream, upon which were two strong towers called the *Tournelles* and a drawbridge connected the *Tournelles* with the south bank. The defences were crowned by seventy cannon—guns of a

very ancient type, muzzle-loading, with a bore so small that a good-sized plum would have stuck in them; nevertheless, they were a great improvement upon the older implements of war, but were regarded by gentlemen on both sides as a rather ruffianly sort of machine. They now found employment at a siege for probably the first time in history. Besides 500 regular soldiers, De Gaucourt commanded a large militia from the town, which manned the walls, one company to each of the thirty-four towers.

To oppose this force the English had only 10,000 men all told, apart from a small army of the Duke of Burgundy's, but they were hardened veterans, skilfully handled by the Earl of Salisbury. They approached Orleans from the other side of the river, whence most of the French supplies were drawn, and Salisbury perceived at once that if he could capture the bridgehead and the Tournelles the French communications would be gravely handicapped, even if he did not succeed in entering the town with the flying foe. Accordingly an attack on the outworks was opened almost at once; the British cannon bombarded them, and despite a fierce resistance the French were thrust back into the town (23rd October). The besiegers' artillery was now dragged into the Tournelles, whence it commanded the main street; they also held the drawbridge, but the other bridge from the Tournelles to the walls was partly destroyed by the retreating French. Despite this promising start, the English soon met with a disaster, for Salisbury, a commander of the highest skill, was killed. He was standing at the bridgehead talking to Sir William Glasdale, when a mischievous schoolboy fired one of the loaded ordnance from the fortifications and ran away; the ball struck the earl in the face, and

knocking him over, killed a gentleman who was standing behind him. Salisbury lived for eight days, after which the Earl of Suffolk took over the command.

The English had disposed their small force in six strong wooden forts which they built in the best strategic positions round the city, and it was their intention so to connect these forts as to enclose it completely, but the shortage of men and the severity of the winter made this impracticable. The garrison, who frequently sallied out, received supplies both of men and food without much hindrance, until there were 7000 troops in the city, with many nobles and knights. Meanwhile, the besiegers persisted in their efforts undismayed. On occasions when there was a lull in the war, individual challenges were issued and accepted, and duels between the chosen champions of each side took place without the city's walls, with not a little of the glamour belonging to the vastly older battles between Paris and Menelaus, Hector and Ajax.

The self-esteem of the English was heightened by an extraordinary little fight in February. They were short of food, and the regent Bedford had sent them 300 wagon-loads of supplies, including many barrels of salted herrings for use during Lent; the convoy comprised a few hundred Parisians and English, under Sir John Fastolfe. The Orleanais, getting wind of this relief, determined to capture the food for themselves. They sent out a much larger force, led by Dunois, De Clermont, La Hire, and other captains, also a body of Scottish auxiliaries. The convoy was successfully ambushed, and when the French guns opened fire there was a momentary confusion in the English column; but their strict discipline prevailed, they formed up in front of the wagons, and planted in the ground before them a line of stakes which they

commonly carried to resist cavalry. From behind this palisade the formidable long-bows began to whistle and when the French and Scots rushed into the open, believing to overwhelm their resistance by main force, they were met by such a hail of shafts as repulsed them completely. The little army charged, and the French fled. Dunois was wounded; 500 of his followers surrendered. As many of the herring barrels had been broken open during this skirmish, it went down to history as the Battle of the Herrings. Its effect on the French was disastrous, reducing them to utter despondency. The captains and the nobles stood not upon the order of their going from Orleans, but went; explaining, as in honour bound, that they could aid the city much better from without! Dunois alone stuck to his post, but even he was so convinced of failure that he offered to hand over the city to his arch-enemy the Duke of Burgundy, rather than allow it to fall into the hands of the English. Burgundy reported this offer to his ally Bedford, but when the latter retorted that he was not disposed to beat the bushes while others gathered the game, Burgundy took offence and withdrew his army; nevertheless, the English continued the siege alone. There was treachery at work within the walls. A party who desired to avoid useless slaughter proposed to let the English in, and some of them even made a small breach in the wall, but the plot was discovered in time and the traitors punished. As to the Dauphin Charles, on whose behalf this heroic struggle was being waged, with the eyes of half Europe upon it, he could think of nothing better than idling his time away and bewailing his misfortunes. It looked as if nothing could save his fortunes, when there suddenly appeared one of the grand heroic figures of history,

in the shape of an unlettered girl whose name and fame were soon to ring through the country like a great alarm.

Jeanne Darc, commonly known as Joan of Arc, was the daughter of a peasant at Domrémy, in distant Lorraine; a tall, well-built, strong girl, with raven hair and bright, truthful eyes, twenty-seven years old, and of a meditative and pious nature. The miseries of France, which the tide of war had twice carried near her home, had made a deep impression upon her. She knew the Dauphin to be an uncrowned young man who was deprived of his rights by the English; but she did not know how much he himself had contributed to that position. She knew too that whenever her countrymen had endeavoured to oppose the English in arms they had failed, and she firmly believed that this was due to lack of resolution and faith in God. In Joan's simple mind the idea that right must triumph over might was always predominant, and she correctly imagined that the best aids to make it do so were energy, self-reliance and faith in God.

Now, for many years there had been current in Lorraine a legend that one day the French kingdom, when reduced to extremities, would be saved by a woman. As Joan pondered upon all these matters during her lonely watches over her father's cattle, she acquired the belief that *she* was the destined heroine of whom the old tale spoke, and as for years she had imagined that angels spoke to her during those long, solitary hours in the fields, so now it was easy for her to believe—and undoubtedly she did believe—that divine commands were given to her which would brook neither denial nor delay. Despite the opposition of her father, who thought her crazy, she said that she must go to Sir Robert de Baudricourt, the governor of the

neighbouring town of Vaucouleurs, by whose aid she intended to reach the dauphin. Joan had also heard of the long siege of Orleans, and she was now instructed by her "holy voices"—really of course the promptings of her intense and generous imagination—to tell the dauphin that God through her would save the city, and that through her, too, the dauphin himself, who held the French crown only as a surety for his Master the Lord, should be crowned and anointed at Rheims Cathedral. All the difficulties of those enterprises—the hardships, ridicule and coarse jests to which she would be exposed; her complete ignorance of camps, courts and warfare—she disregarded completely; it sufficed that God had commanded, and that she, as His chosen instrument, must obey. Faith moves mountains. It was the same spirit which had prompted the Crusades, and which—so rare to-day—was long afterwards to spread the order of Jesuits all over the world.

When, despite all remonstrances, she went at length to Vaucouleurs, there were people ready to believe in her; for her striking appearance, her spotless purity, her piety, her skilled horsemanship, all seemed to the ignorant to be signs of a divine mission. Subtler minds, too, which were seeking something that would remove from the French their despondent sense of unvarying defeat, found this something in Joan's faith. Whether De Baudricourt believed her story or not, he certainly—after some efforts to get rid of her had failed—obtained from the dauphin permission for Joan to visit him at Chinon, where he held his little court. She was asked how she would prefer to go, and answered "As a soldier". Her enthusiastie supporters found her a horse and a complete suit of armour; de Baudricourt himself provided

a sword, and in this wise, bearing a banner emblematic of her mission, and escorted by two armed attendants, Joan went to Chinon. Tradition has it that the dauphin disguised himself among his *courtiers*; but she picked him out, and falling on her knees before him, recited her mission.

Charles was afraid of witchcraft, but he was intrigued by the idea, and he perceived the value of her contagious enthusiasm. Quarters were assigned to her, and after severe cross-questioning by the clergy of the court (from which she emerged triumphant) the dauphin affected to believe in her divine mission and did what little he could to help it. Dunois, too, who felt the need of a fresh inspiration in the present sombre state of his fortunes, asked repeatedly that she might be sent to the beleaguered people of Orleans.

A convoy of provisions from Blois was about to be taken to the city. The maid accompanied it, clad in a suit of shining armour which had been expressly made for her, with a consecrated sword by her side and a consecrated banner borne before her; she rode her black war-horse with a skill bred of many years in the saddle, and was indeed an inspiring and noble figure. The real command of course rested with those about her, but in some respects she ruled the army. She tamed it from a flock of wolves, foul-mouthed and foul-living, into an orderly body of men who had been shamed into decency (at least outwardly) and who attended at her roadside masses. The women and other disorderly camp followers were dismissed. The most savage hearts must have felt that the influence of God had descended upon them, and that now they were fighting for a holy cause—in itself no inconsiderable factor of success.

On 28th April the towers of Orleans came into

view. The maid, who scorned disguise, had apprised the English beforehand of her coming, and had warned them not to try to stop her, but to depart. She now proposed to march boldly in; but Dunois, who had come out to meet her, counselled the more prudent course of entering at an unprotected point, and despite the maid's protest this was done, the convoy entering Orleans during a thunderstorm (29th April). The relief had been long expected and the maid's arrival with it produced a tremendous effect. As to the English, they seemed paralysed by amazement, and they kept within their forts, watching idly while a second convoy entered the town.

Dunois took advantage of this changed state of feeling to make a raid upon Fort St. Loup, one of the English posts. Joan, who had not been told, was resting when it occurred. By some strange instinct she divined that all was not well, and rising, suddenly exclaimed: "My God, the blood of our people is running on the ground. It was ill done. Why was not I awakened? Quick, my arms, my horse!" She buckled on her armour and galloped to the gate, only to meet the tide of fugitives returning, for the attack had failed. She saw without flinching the horrors of war, the broken limbs and blood-stained garments, and heard the curses of the wounded and the groans of the dying. "My hair stands on end," said Joan, but nevertheless spurred her horse forward, pointing her banner towards the English fort and rallying her people. The retreat ceased, and presently they were sufficiently recovered to renew the attack. "Go in and get them!" cried Joan, herself setting the example by riding into the thick of the feathered messengers of death. This time the French were irresistible. The fort fell, most of its occupants being massacred, despite Joan's unavailing

protests. When it was all over, she burst into tears; yet the ardent flame burnt in her soul as fiercely as ever. This conspicuous success convinced the defenders that Joan was a heaven-sent guide, and such was their state of mind that they would have dared anything. The leaders immediately utilized it for a further enterprise.

The English held two forts on the opposite bank of the river. Their foes, who were well provided with small craft of all kinds, crossed the Loire unexpectedly, fell upon the forts and seized them, massacring the occupants; this left to the besiegers on that side only the bridgehead and the Tournelles, a vital point that was held by Sir William Glasdale with 500 men. Glasdale was a skilful knight, impervious to the darkly whispered stories of magic, and a personal foe of Joan's, for he had shouted out to her, when she first appeared, "Go back to Lorraine and look after your cows!"

Emboldened by their repeated successes, the French now resolved to attack him, and on the morning of 7th May they again crossed the river in thousands and fell upon the bridgehead like a swarm of hornets. It was defended by a moat, at that season dry. Joan of Arc, in full armour, was among the foremost to descend, and no sooner had a ladder been planted against the wall than she mounted it, waving her banner and urging the French on. But an archer, taking careful aim, struck her between the joints of her armour, the shaft passing right through just beneath the collar-bone. She fell back and was carried out of range. The attack, which had owed much of its fury to her presence, went on unabated for a while; the French, thirsting for revenge, struggling in vain to get across the moat or up the ladders, until the ground

was covered with their dead and wounded, but it was no good. The inspiration had gone. Even Dunois lost heart, and calling off his men, withdrew a few hundred yards amid the jeers of the English, who, believing Joan to be dead, by this time were shouting to their enemies to bring back their maid. Imagine their amazement and horror when, a little while after, she did appear, pale but resolute, and still urging her compatriots on. The arrow had been removed and the wound dressed, when Joan, who was fainting with the loss of blood and the pain, saw that the attack had failed. This acted upon her like a spark on gunpowder, for she would never admit defeat, and therein lay the secret of her extraordinary success: the God of battles always rewards the most persistent. Joan implored the leaders to renew the attack. "Rest your men awhile; try again; and the place is ours." There was hesitancy, but Joan, rising and seizing her banner, rushed forward with the cry of "To the walls! When my sacred banner touches the wall, do you climb once more to the parapet, and the place is ours!" She was followed by a gathering crowd, some from anger, some from belief in her, some from shame. They leapt into the ditch. The banner touched the stone. The ladders were up, and the men were scaling them; while the English, by no means so resolute as before, made efforts to stem the flood. Even with the presence of Joan, however, the attack must have failed, but for a most timely and totally unexpected diversion.

The militia within the city, acting without orders, and hearing the tumult at the bridgehead, had improvised a bridge of planks, which they threw across the broken arch to the Tournelles; then they rushed across it, taking the English in the rear. Glasdale was now in a serious difficulty. He had too few men

to retain both points effectively—he could only just hold his own before, and he saw that one or the other post must be abandoned, and that quickly. He decided at once to hold the strongly fortified islet, hauling up the drawbridge after him, and abandoning the bridgehead at which the maid and her champions were thundering. But to retreat from such a post in the face of a victorious enemy was a most dangerous manœuvre, and it failed disastrously. After many of his men had been withdrawn to meet the attack on the Tournelles, Glasdale himself was crossing the drawbridge, when Joan saw him from the parapet, which she had now gained. She shouted across the river, "Surrender, surrender to the king of heaven! Glasdale, you have foully wronged me with your words, but I have great pity on you and the souls of your men. Surrender!" He took no notice, but a moment later a lucky shot from the French cannon carried the bridge away, and he fell with it into the Loire and was drowned. The plight of the English was now hopeless; part of them were cut off, leaderless, on the islet; part remained penned up in the bridgehead. Some few surrendered, but the greater part were slaughtered. The bridge was then hastily restored, and across it Joan led the victorious army back into the town amid the wild pealing of bells and the huzzas of the multitude. If the French had ever doubted that God was on their side, they did so no longer.

To the English cause this loss was fatal. Suffolk and Talbot now had to deal, not only with a town which contained far more troops than their own, but with a spirit of feebleness and indecision that had rarely been seen in an English army before, for whatever the leaders might think, the men-at-arms were speedily becoming convinced that they were be-

witched. Moreover, the loss of the Tournelles gave to the enemy completely open access to their own part of France.

The very next day the siege was raised, and the remaining forts blown up. It was a Sunday, and as the English abandoned the place they drew up defiantly in battle order, upon the edge of the moat. Many there were among the Orleannais who would have accepted that challenge and if they had done so, the rest of the story might have been different; for there has never been anything more terrible in history than an English army which was really angered. But Joan was wiser. It was Sunday; the French must not fight. She knew full well too that a fight in the open could have but one result, whatever the numbers of the French; had not the Battle of the Herrings proved it, during this very siege? So the English were allowed to depart, their challenge unanswered and their honour unavenged. Orleans was free.



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Joan of Arc
From the statue by Frémiet

Chap IV

CHAPTER V

The Siege of Antwerp

Let us move the fingers of time's clock to the year 1584, only a few months before Protestant England and Catholic Spain drifted into the war that produced the Great Armada. At that date the tulip fields of Holland and the grimy industrial regions of Belgium alike had no existence; they were Brabant and Flanders, and the waste of sand, mud and water known as the Netherlands, where for twenty years the most cruel of civil wars between Alva's barbarous soldiery and the dauntless boors and burghers had torn the country to pieces. The banners of the Inquisition on one side, and of the Reformation on the other, had waved during those twenty years over many a hard-fought field and on the walls of many a beleaguered city. Haarlem and Leyden had sustained sieges which for sheer heroism will never be surpassed; Antwerp, one of the greatest cities in Europe, had been taken by the Spanish viceroy, and its streets had run red with the blood of its butchered citizens. Now, however, matters were somewhat better. The Spanish king had relaxed his fierce grip, though not his claims, upon the Netherlands, and had tightened that grip more closely on Flanders, which was always predominantly Catholic. The rebels, on the other hand, had proclaimed themselves a new sovereign state, the United Netherlands; between the two lay Antwerp, at that time almost a state of its own, but rebel by nature, and pointing like

a spearhead into the centre of Spanish influence. It was inevitable that an attack should be made upon Antwerp, and on the very day when the first step was taken in this siege—the 10th July, 1584, William of Orange, the head and forefront of the rebellion, was assassinated with the knowledge and approval of the Spanish viceroy.

Antwerp was a strongly fortified city, standing on the right bank of the broad deep river Scheldt. It was separated from the ocean by fifty miles of low, sandy and muddy ground, where thousands of fat cattle found rich grazing, and across which the Hollanders from the north, in leather jerkins and thigh-boots, wandered almost at will. The river was held in its channel by a system of strong earthen ramparts, the dykes, faced with stones and timber piles; similar ramparts held out the sea, for most of the plain was below sea-level. Given the opportunity, the patriots of Antwerp could at any time submerge all their surroundings, up to the city's wall, beneath ten feet or more of water. The populace outnumbered the Spaniards by twenty to one, and although they were a mere undisciplined militia, they were strengthened by a stout band of British mercenaries. Alexander of Parma, therefore, who now approached the place, had no thoughts of a direct assault but he hoped to reduce it by famine. First he isolated it from Flanders, by compelling the surrender of the few remaining patriot towns, and by besieging Brussels; next, he proposed to cut it off from the Dutch by bridging the Scheldt, a feat worthy to be placed beside his namesake's mole at Tyre. For the Scheldt, you must understand, was half a mile wide, sixty feet deep, with a strong current and in winter liable to bear down huge cakes of ice that would smash away any ordinary obstruction.

The man who contemplated this great engineering feat was now a veteran soldier of thirty-seven, with curly black hair, neatly trimmed beard, and the keen black eye and bold hooked nose of a born leader. Alexander was more humane than the detested Alva, but he served the same master, Philip II, a narrow-minded bigot who was determined to crush the revolted provinces at any cost, while he supplied his commander with neither the men nor the means for doing it.

Parma's opponents, although numerous, did not make up in numbers for what they lacked in ability. Prince Maurice, their nominal head since the death of his father, William of Orange, was an untried youth of seventeen. The ruler of Antwerp, the Burgomaster Ste. Aldegonde, although highly gifted, lacked the forceful leadership so essential in one who had daily to contend with the numerous councils and associations that comprised the city's government, and each of which thought more of its own interests than of the common welfare. Some of the other leaders, too, were unhappily chosen. The Admiral, Jacobszoon, displayed such cowardice that the people nicknamed him "Runaway Jacob". The generalissimo, Count Hohenlo, was an impetuous, hot-headed cavalier, handsome and dissipated, with long curls flowing carelessly over his shoulders; as often drunk as sober, he was equally liable to carry the strongest fort by a brilliant assault and to lose it again by his own gross mismanagement. William of Orange, shortly before his death, had foreseen the impending struggle at Antwerp and had recommended the municipality to flood the country; but upon Ste. Aldegonde attempting to comply, there was such an outcry that he desisted and when at last the burghers, under the stern pressure of famine, were

willing to let in the sea, their enemies held the dykes and the opportunity had passed for ever. The patriots, in a word, were united in hatred of the Spaniards, but disunited in everything else.

Immediately below the city the broad Scheldt bends to the north, and six miles lower down it bends again, having on its left bank the high-lying village of Calloo; a few houses and tall-spined church, nestling in a grove of poplars. At this peaceful spot Parma fixed his headquarters, transforming it into the bustling, noisy centre of a camp. All the labour in the vicinity was at once impressed into Spanish service; for here, where the Scheldt narrowed to 900 yards, with a depth of sixty feet and a tidal rise of eleven feet, he had determined to build his bridge.

Between Calloo and the city a number of small wooden forts, partly standing on the strong embankment and partly on piles, commanded the river. Some of them were held by Parma's people, others by the patriots and throughout the siege all alike were liable to sudden alarms—a surprise attack, the crash of cannon balls against the timber, the assault, the combat, the massacre, were daily features of that dismal year in the water-drowned Netherlands. Two or three miles downstream from Calloo there stood on the opposite shore the termination of the important Kowensteyn Dyke. It was overlooked by two forts; that of Lillo close by, and that of Liefkenshoek (Darling's Corner) on the Calloo side of the Scheldt; both were held by the Dutch. Still farther down the river a second barrier, the Blauwgaren or Blue Thread dyke, ran roughly parallel to the Kowensteyn and kept out the sea. Beyond this was an amphibious region, heartily dreaded by the Spaniards. It comprised creeks and muddy channels of Zeeland and the Nether-

lands, swarming with small Dutch craft whose owners had the best of reasons for hating their Spanish king. When the Dutch admiral who had been ordered to provision Antwerp gave signs of going over to the enemy he was arrested and his place taken by these boatmen, who constantly carried food and supplies to the city, exchanging shots and abuse with the Spanish sentries on the dykes; sometimes, however, they were caught, and then the boat, with its occupants barbarously deprived of hands and legs, was sent up to the city as a fearful reminder of Parma's presence. Nevertheless, these trusty friends would have continued their invaluable work for many months had it not been for the incredible stupidity of the Antwerp magistrates themselves. Finding that the prices of food rose, they fixed maximum rates beyond which nobody might purchase; so the Dutch since their risk did not meet with a reasonable return, ceased to attempt the passage.

On the day on which William the Silent was murdered Parma commenced operations at Antwerp by attacking the two forts at Lillo and Darling's Corner for without these it was hazardous to attempt to build his bridge, since the Dutch could at any time swarm down upon his works and destroy them. The fort at Darling's Corner was unfinished, and it was hoped by a swift attack at the weak spot to overwhelm it. The Spanish were led by the Marquis de Richebourg, a Belgian noble who, like many others, had turned traitor to the patriot cause; they numbered only 100, whereas the defenders were 400 strong and were commanded by Colonel Pettin, a veteran of that terrible war. As so often happens, speed conquered mere strength. The place was rushed and the defenders massacred almost before they knew that the

attack had begun. Pettin was captured and was carried before Parma, where he found Richebourg. Now, both Pettin and Richebourg knew that the latter had been secretly corresponding with William the Silent and to prevent any possibility of a disclosure, the Marquis calmly drew his sword and ran the old man through the heart—a brutal murder which called forth only the gentlest reproof; such were the habits of the “noble Spaniard”.

The 2000 patriots in Lillo Fort put up a very different fight. The place was attacked by one of the sternest Spanish captains, the fierce Mondragon, with 5000 men, and its capture was regarded as vital, but the French Huguenot chief, Teligny, who commanded the garrison—which included 500 Scottish mercenaries under Colonel Morgan—was fully prepared, and the surprise failed. Mondragon then tried a regular siege but the enemy sallied forth repeatedly, slew his men in the trenches, and at last, after three weeks of fierce struggling, took advantage of a high tide to open the sluice-gates of the Scheldt and drown the Spaniards wholesale. The sodden, famished and unhappy army then withdrew but such was still its discipline that all the guns were carried off, although the men were waist-deep in water and mud.

Despite this setback, Alexander persisted in the preparations for building his bridge; but the formidable difficulties of the enterprise were only just beginning. Timber had to be brought, under escort, from considerable distances. The piles had to be driven to an unprecedented depth in the river mud. There was always a cloud of patriot skirmishers, thick and persistent as gnats, to be driven away. Finally, the great sluice-gates at Saftingen, on the coast, were opened and a muddy flood, rushing over the entire

lowland, reduced Calloo, Lillo and a few other relatively high-lying places to islets. Churches were submerged to their steeples; the patriot and Spanish shipping came to grips above the farm-yards and the orchards and the only land communication was by way of the narrow embankments that ran in serpentine lines along and athwart the river. The greatest of the embankments, the Blauwgaren and Kowensteyn dykes, rose above the waters as continuous fortified lines, barring the way between the Dutch fleet and the city. There had been a time when both could have been broken by the patriots' spades, even during the early days of the siege, but now both were heavily fortified and could only be attacked at much hazard and with the probability of failure.

Under these conditions Parma gained more from the floods than the besieged, because his supplies, which were partly drawn from the Flanders side of the city, could now come round by water, thereby avoiding the fire of its guns. One strong convoy, indeed, was heavily attacked but the burghers were no match for the highly trained Spanish infantry, and were beaten off with heavy loss. It was in this action that Admiral Jacobszoon earned his title of "Runaway Jacob".

Soon afterwards the city suffered a still heavier calamity. An attack had been planned on the Kowensteyn Dyke, in conjunction with the Dutch; and Teligny, wishing to make sure that the arrangements were thoroughly understood, himself went out in a small boat. He was attacked, wounded and captured, and thereby the patriots lost one of the few leaders they possessed who might have saved their cause.

Meanwhile, Parma was steadily overcoming his own mountainous difficulties. Two strong timber jetties,

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supported upon huge piles, were built far out from both banks; at the head of one stood a palisaded work, Fort St. Mary; at the head of the other, on the right or Antwerp shore, was Fort St. Philip. Along the jetties ran a roadway twelve feet wide, protected by frequent blockhouses. But there still remained a gap of more than 660 yards, through which the Scheldt rushed resistlessly; to span this Parma intended to use a bridge of boats. But he was short of timber, he had little food and no money; his starving troops, many of whom had been without pay for two years, were deserting in hundreds, and those who remained were compelled to toil like slaves all day in water and mud, and to sleep at night in verminous quarters, liable at any instant to be roused by the alarm bell. If in the darkness they assembled on the jetties or the embankment, it was but to catch a fleeting glimpse of enemy boats out on the black flood and to receive a hail of shot from foes upon whom they could not retaliate.

Parma procured many of his supplies from Boisle-Duc, a town ferociously sympathetic to Spain, and lying in Brabant nearly fifty miles away. The patriots determined to capture this place, sending for the purpose no fewer than 4000 Dutch infantry, with 200 mounted lancers, under the leadership of the dashing Hohenloo. They approached the town cautiously, without raising an alarm, and Captain Kleerhagen, who knew the place intimately, went to the Antwerp gate with fifty picked men, gained admission by a trick, murdered most of the watch, and rushed on headlong into the town. Hohenloo, on learning of their success, himself followed at once with the 200 troopers and 500 pikemen. Instead of being protected by a strong force, the gate, a vital spot, was left in the

charge of a corporal and two men, all of whom speedily ran into the town after their fellows, being on plunder bent. Meanwhile, a dying watchman had shut the gate after Hohenloo had galloped out to fetch up the remainder of his men; those inside the town unexpectedly ran into the governor's guard, and after a short fight recoiled, fled and were systematically hunted out and slain. When the imprudent Hohenloo returned he was greeted by a volley from the citizens who manned the walls; any further attack was hopeless. Thus was lost such a chance of destroying Parma's source of supplies as never recurred.

At last, on 25th Feb., 1585, the great bridge was finished, amid the firing of cannon and the ringing of bells. The gap had been closed by thirty-two barges, each sixty-two feet long and twelve feet wide, bound together by hawsers and chains. Each barge mounted two pieces of artillery, one pointing upstream and the other down, and was manned by thirty-two soldiers and four sailors. It carried a roadway which rose and fell with the tide; outside the parapet was a stout breast-work to keep off the Dutch. To meet the even greater danger of damage or ruin through cakes of ice, which at this season were liable to come down in force and smash a way through, an enormous raft 400 yards wide was built on either side of the central channel, resting on barrels that were securely anchored in the mud; the edges of each raft bore a row of sharp iron stakes and hooks. So proud were the Spaniards of this great work that a spy from the city was shown over it and then sent home to tell of the marvel; but in reality Parma's plight was little better than the enemy's, for his men were dying of hunger in the forts, he had few supplies and no money to purchase more, and even the arrival of reinforcements from

Brussels (which city had now capitulated after a siege of nine months) did not greatly improve his position. At this crisis the patriots elected to strike a number of shrewd blows at their foe, any of which with a little better fortune might have caused him to raise the siege.

During the press of graver matters, the fort captured at Darling's Corner had been allowed to fall into a state of imaginary security. On 4th April a swarm of vessels from Zeeland, under Admiral Justinus de Nassau, supported by other vessels under Hohenloo from Fort Lillo, suddenly appeared before it; the wall was breached, the patriots clambered up out of the slime in great numbers, and the Spaniards, smitten with panic, were chased along the dykes until they were either killed on the embankment or hurled into the water and drowned. Following up this success, the next fort downstream to Darling's Corner was carried with the same ease and speed. Now, the dyke upon which these forts stood ran on the Antwerp side to Parma's headquarters at Calloo, some three miles away, but it had been broken opposite the village itself. Upon the broken end the patriots had planned to entrench themselves, erect a fort there, and cannonade the bridge at close quarters. But Parma, hearing the firing, realized the danger and got there first. As soon as he heard that Darling's Corner was lost he sent across from Calloo every sapper and miner on whom he could lay hands, and when morning dawned a new fort already stood in outline on the vital spot. The patriots thereupon confined themselves to making sure of what they had won already.

Meanwhile, a still more deadly enterprise had been under way for some time. The citizens of Antwerp had spent much money and skill on the construction

of a huge fireship, which they christened "The War's End", in the hope that it must inevitably burn out the bridge. Its progress was slow, however, and meantime an Italian scientist within the city, named Gianibelli, who had a personal grievance against the Spaniards, proposed a swifter termination to Parma's toils. Had this man's plans been adhered to the bridge would almost inevitably have been destroyed and the siege raised, but he was restricted to two small vessels of seventy and eighty tons respectively, named the *Fortune* and the *Hope*, which he proceeded to equip with an extremely deadly cargo. The entire hold of each vessel was lined with a floor of brick and mortar-work, one foot thick and five feet wide; upon it he had built a stone chamber containing 7000 lb. of gunpowder. It was covered with a roof six feet thick, made out of tombstones placed edgewise; and upon this there rested a pyramid of heavy marble slabs, millstones, cannon-balls, chain-shot, iron hooks and knives—in a word, every dangerous missile that might be sent whirling through the air. Above everything was a light plank floor, upon which lay a pile of faggots, so that the vessel might look like an ordinary fireship instead of a floating mine. A slow match was designed to fire the *Fortune*, but the eruption of the *Hope* was to take place by clockwork, a spark from a flint firing the gunpowder. To distract the enemy's attention while these monsters floated down to their stations, thirty-two ordinary fireships or "hell-burners" were also prepared, being covered with tar, turpentine, resin, and other inflammable stuff; it was hoped that they would set fire to the rafts, while the *Fortune* and the *Hope* kept in the clear central channel. These fireships were to be floated down with the ebb, eight every half-hour; and to be followed by the floating mines.

On the evening of the 5th April, a dark, stormy night entirely favourable to the enterprise, the fleet was released. Runaway Jacob, who was in charge, upset all the plans by sending off the fireships together as fast as they could be released. They disappeared, down the long straight stretch of the river and were soon lost in the mist; a little later they emerged as vivid burning torches, casting a ghastly light upon the black water. Behind them, and quite invisible, were the *Fortune* and *Hope*. Parma, who had got wind of the event, rowed across from shore to shore in his anxiety, his men meanwhile manning both banks and the bridge, the gunners with matches ready lighted, the men-at-arms in their ranks, ready for any eventuality. There was an ominous silence, one side waiting for the expected attack, the other for the impending explosion.

The small craft drifted either ashore or upon the raft, where they became entangled, and after causing some small fires burnt themselves out; and the Spaniards began to breathe more freely. At that moment the *Fortune* appeared in the open channel, having just been abandoned by her crew. She missed the raft, struck the dyke heavily between it and the bridge and went aground on the Calloo side. The slow match spluttered out, and there was a faint, ineffectual explosion; the Spaniards then rushed aboard and kicked the burning embers into the water. Meanwhile the *Hope* following a truer course, struck full against the bridge, close to the Calloo blockhouse, before which Parma himself was standing bareheaded. Her deck was on fire, but Richebourg, imagining that she was as poor a squib as the *Fortune*, sprang aboard with a party to extinguish the flames. A moment later there was a terrific crash, so terrible that

it broke the windows of houses miles away. After the blinding flash came intense blackness; but the air was full of whirling limbs and bodies, paving-stones, shot and all the other dreadful missiles. As this fearful hail crashed to earth it struck down 800 of Parma's best troops, with many of their captains. He himself was blown down and lay for a while unconscious. The bridge, on which so many months of toil had been expended, was a bridge no more, for through a gap 200 feet wide the tide was streaming, carrying away the human and other wreckage from the disaster. Richebourg, the murderer of the old Dutch soldier, vanished completely, and it was several days before his body was found hanging round an iron chain in the centre of the river. Nevertheless there were some wonderful escapes; for instance, the Vicomte de Bruxelles, who was blown out of a boat near the bank, rose high into the air and crashed down again into another boat in mid-stream, yet he escaped unharmed!

The tremendous report must have announced a Spanish disaster to the waiting patriots, even if it did not mean that the bridge was destroyed; yet they did nothing. The cowardly Jacobszoon, instead of obeying his instructions by pushing on to the bridge, sent a few boatmen instead, who lost heart and returned with the utterly false story that the attempt had miscarried. Three days elapsed before a bold swimmer from Antwerp learned the truth, and in those three days the Spanish had recovered their wonted courage and had rigged up a temporary wooden staging across the gap. Once again the men of Antwerp were too late.

But the fate of the city was by no means decided. Fireship after fireship was floated down towards the

bridge, with a persistence only equalled by that of the Spaniards in hauling them to the banks and destroying them; yet even as they spluttered harmlessly everyone had the dread that here might be another hidden mine. Nor were their nerves quieted by the perpetual exchange of beacon fires and rocket signals between the city and the Dutch; neither the commander nor his troops knew a moment's repose of mind. An attempt of Alexander's to recapture the Darling's Corner fort was beaten off; the rate of desertion in his army increased alarmingly, and he was even compelled to abandon all the other enterprises to which, as viceroy of a rebellious province, he was committed, and to concentrate his whole force upon the besieged city.

But all was not well in Antwerp either. Many of the richest merchants had slunk away, taking their securities with them. Although the food problem had not yet become acute, there were nearly 100,000 mouths to eat into the rapidly dwindling reserves, and the bridge seemed an insuperable barrier between the burghers and their friends on the Dutch border. It was now resolved to attempt something which should have been done months before, to seize and destroy the Kowensteyn Dyke which, like a fortified wall, stretched across the flooded country between the city and Zeeland. The embankment was three miles long, being defended by a row of wooden stakes along its whole extent on both sides, besides a small fort at every mile; on the other hand, the embankment itself was so narrow that a determined attack on both sides simultaneously stood an excellent chance of cutting it in halves, and if that were done, Parma and his camp at Calloo would be cut off from the Spanish headquarters, while the way would be cleared for

Dutch vessels to sail right up to the city's walls.

On the night of 7th May, a fleet from Lillo, with Hohenloo and 500 troops on board, rowed silently across to the Kowensteyn. They drew up unperceived between the forts of St. George and Palisade, and clambering ashore overbore the sentries and firmly established themselves athwart the embankment. It had been intended for the Antwerpens to attempt a like enterprise on their side simultaneously; then, while the combined troops held back the Spaniards in their forts the workmen who had accompanied the expedition would cut the neck of the dyke. But unfortunately the signals had been mistaken, and the Antwerp party never left the city. The Spanish drums beat to arms, and their cannon began to boom through the night mist and by the light of flares a solid wall of mail-clad infantry was seen approaching from both sides. The enemy's ships, too, opened a galling flank fire upon the mass of patriots on the bank; they recoiled involuntarily and disaster followed in an instant. More than half of them were slain on the bank itself or drowned in the water; four of their ships also fell to the victors.

Undeterred by this failure, a second attempt was planned for the 26th May, this time on a vastly larger scale. The combined patriot fleet numbered 200 vessels; Hohenloo and Justinus de Nassau led the Dutch, Ste. Aldegonde himself was in command of the besieged. On that Sunday morning, approaching in almost complete silence, and in the deep gloom before dawn, four Dutch fireships approached the dyke; they were ignited, but burnt out harmlessly against the palisade; nevertheless the Spaniards had involuntarily run back to the shelter of their block-houses.

Meanwhile the real attack had been launched much farther away, between the forts of Palisade and St. George. Suddenly the sentries saw in the gloom the shadowy outline of ships on the Dutch side; a crowd of equally shadowy figures leapt overboard; there was a scuffle, a few shots were fired, and the patriots once more bestrode the embankment. But the Spaniards, who had by this time recovered from their surprise, rushed upon them from both sides, and by sheer weight of numbers drove them back to the slimy water's edge; some of the invaders took to their boats, and their leader, Admiral Haultain, was drowned. But at this instant a cheer from the other side announced that the Antwerp fleet had arrived. Led by Ste. Aldegonde himself, the Antwerpers tumbled overboard and the Spaniards, attacked from both sides, and from the ships which now lay-to along the dyke, fell back in disorder upon their forts. Three thousand patriots rushed ashore and while at each end the fighting men lined up to oppose and attack the foe, the digging brigade at once began to throw up an entrenchment and to cut the wall. It was the city's supreme effort, nobly supported by their friends from without. Young Prince Maurice was there, and the celebrated statesman John of Olden-Barneveld; and the British contingent under Balfour and Morgan; even Runaway Jacob played a man's part this day. They had sworn to sever the dyke or perish. It was the crisis of the siege. Meanwhile the Prince of Parma lay fast asleep nearly a dozen miles off.

The invaders repulsed a stern sally from Fort St. James, next beyond St. George, after a tremendous action, breast to breast, pistol to pistol, with sword and dagger, on that narrow ground, all fighting, as Parma said afterwards, like mad bull-dogs. The

Spanish held the forts, but they could not advance a yard from their shelter and at Fort Palisade their commander was wounded, and the Dutch gained its outworks. Soon afterwards a ringing cheer announced success, for salt water had burst through the ruptured embankment. Through the gap the jubilant patriots drove a Zeeland barge, laden with provisions. The Spaniards seemed dumbfounded and did nothing; for three vital hours the patriots held the heart of the Kowensteyne. But instead of remaining at their posts, ready to deal with any emergency, Ste. Aldegonde and Hohenloo committed the incredible folly of rowing back to Antwerp, nearly ten miles away, to announce their success. Battles are not won by such acts as this.

At the landward end of the dyke stood Fort Stabroek, the Spanish headquarters of the veteran Count Mansfeld. Here a council of war was held. It was proposed to send a boat across to Parma for succour, but Col. Capizucci, of the Italian Legion, voted for instant action, and undertook to lead his men on to the dyke. Mansfeld was of the same mind. He had already expressed the forcible opinion that his side this day "must either beat the enemy or burst"; and now the fateful attack was decided upon. Three hundred picked Italian veterans formed the spearhead, supported by a welcome reinforcement of 200 fresh Spaniards who had just arrived under Don Juan d'Aquila. There was a dispute for precedence, which was settled by Aquila's exclaiming: "Shoulder to shoulder let us go into this business, and let our blows rather fall on our enemies' heads than upon each other." In this determined spirit they marched along the dyke, exposed to a fierce fire from the Dutch ships, and fell upon the besiegers of the Palisade Fort; at the same

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time the defenders attempted a sally. There was a terrible struggle, but the better discipline of the Spaniards prevailed against the rude native valour; the patriots, abandoning their position, fell back to a strong entrenchment which had been built across the dyke; Fort Palisade was saved.

Distant shouts now announced that Alexander was coming at last on the other side. Hearing the gunfire from afar, and divining its importance, he had hurried on his armour and gathered together 200 pikemen, whom he led at once to the bridge. Here a fight was in progress against a detachment of the Antwerp fleet; but they were driven off, and he then marched on to the main scene of action, ordering every available gun to be brought along and turned upon the enemy's fleet. Mondragon was sent ahead to Fort St. George, followed by 100 musketeers and pikemen. As soon as this body neared the fort, there ensued a desperate hand-to-hand conflict; the fierce bands, filled with the hatred of internecine war, swayed in each other's embrace, shouting, stabbing, swearing, shooting; yet despite the help of the fleet (whence a stream of balls sent many a mail-clad figure crashing down the embankment into the mud) the Spaniards prevailed and fought their way up to the fort, the patriots retreating step by step before them.

At last Parma arrived. He at once ordered an additional breastwork of sacks and sandbags to be thrown up round the fort, and a battery was ordered to play upon the embankment. The situation was one almost unparalleled in military history. Upon a wall almost a mile long, yet scarcely six paces broad, with flood-water spreading out into the gloom and grey-ness on both sides, more than 5000 men were at death-grips. The patriots held most of this line, being pro-

tected at either end by a trench and a rampart, but through the middle of their position ran the flood which they had themselves let in, and while their armed men manned the two ramparts, their miners frenziedly heaved out spadeful after spadeful of earth and stones, every stroke enlarging the gap. Beyond the ramparts were the two little forts, their outworks stained with slime and blood, their bases littered with the bodies of the fallen, and their walls belching forth fire and smoke. Between these forts and the patriots stood the close ranks of the Spanish and Italian infantry, with gleaming breastplates, pikes, swords, daggers, and huge, clumsy muskets, separated from their foes by a rapidly mounting wall of dying and dead. Over this horrid mound they clambered time after time, only to be repulsed invariably from the edge of the patriot rampart. There was no regular volleying, or the thing would have been impossible; only the confused shooting of men in a mob, and the struggle shoulder-to-shoulder. Each man fought for himself alone, like a wild-cat at bay, stabbing, clutching, lunging, yielding, and slithering away into the slime as the fortune of war bore him down. For the fourth time the Spaniards came on, and for the fourth time the stout and valiant peasants and townsmen beat them back. Captain Heraugiere, who had led 200 troops into action, now had but thirteen left; the fight had lasted an hour and a half, and still that narrow bit of earth and the grim human wall behind it defied the best warriors of Spain. The Spanish indeed wavered, and but for Alexander's presence might have yielded; then they were recalled to a final charge. The breastwork was gained. Colonel Toralva leaped over it into the ditch, only to be felled immediately, but Capizucci, who had followed him, held his own sufficiently long for others to force their

way in. Even then the action might have gone hardly but for a misfortune which now overtook the patriots. The tide had been falling steadily for some time. Many of their ships were already aground, and the crews, fearing to be caught there if things went wrong on the dyke, sheered off. Without the aid of their cross-fire, a Spanish victory became a certainty. The men on the dyke, seized with panic at the withdrawal of their fleet, broke away and ran down to the water, where they were followed by the exultant foe and slain in hundreds. The Scots went with them, the English alone stood firm, an immovable block in the general wreck, and were for the most part destroyed where they stood. During this last desperate struggle, Admiral Jacobszoon was killed. The Dutch admiral, Justinus de Nassau, sprang off the far end of the dyke, hid among some reeds, took off his armour there, and swam away to a boat. Prince Maurice and Olden-Barneveld also got away, but the patriots left 2000 dead on the dyke, besides many stranded ships. The Spanish loss was also very great, but it was offset by the sense of invulnerability which now descended upon their leaders' heads. As for those in Antwerp, who had so foolishly been preparing to celebrate their victory, they received, not a host of provision ships, but a crowd of battered vessels full of wounded and dying men.

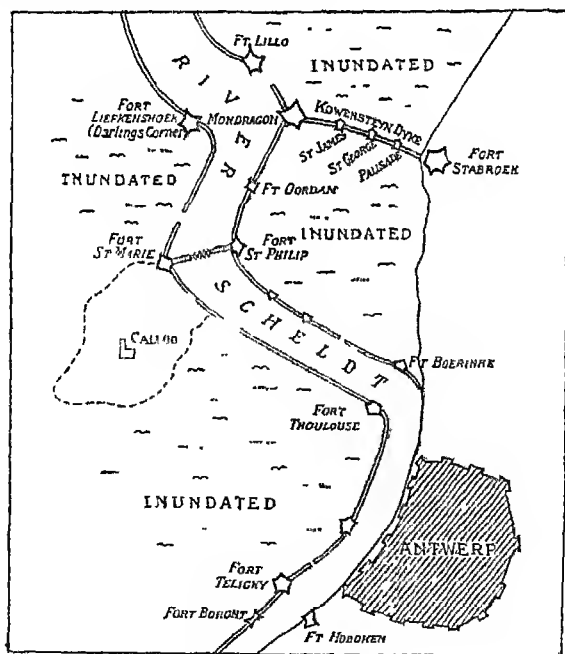
The great struggle at the Kowensteyn Dyke really decided the fate of the city. The siege had yet some months to run, and many a sally was made, but the end was certain. Before matters came to extremities, Ste. Aldegonde opened a communication with the enemy (for which he was afterwards censured and disgraced, although he probably acted wisely), and on 17th August he capitulated, on condition that there

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should be a complete amnesty, and that only German or Flemish soldiers should enter the city. Protestants were to be allowed to depart in peace; Antwerp was to acknowledge the king.

So ended a struggle of more than a year's duration, in the course of which, though many terrible battles took place, not once did the wall of the besieged city feel the shock of an encounter; a struggle moreover in which a small but highly trained army, led by a man of inflexible determination, proved once again the superiority of a fixed purpose over mere numbers and uncontrolled enthusiasm.



CHAPTER VI

The Siege of Gibraltar

During the two centuries following the siege of Antwerp all types of firearms became so much deadlier that the entire scheme of siege operations had to be drastically altered. The masterly skill of Vauban and other military engineers so materially strengthened fortresses, by means of new scarps, counterscarps, bastions, revetments, cross-fire, *chevaux-de-frises*, &c., and the effectiveness of small-arms and cannon became so much greater in consequence that it was no longer possible to attempt an escalade by the primitive methods of older times: never again would a Richard Lionheart batter down the door of a Torquilstone Castle with battle-axe or mace. The besiegers now established themselves at a respectful distance from their objective, at least out of range of the enemy's guns, and dug one, two or more trenches, called *parallels* because they roughly followed the line of the walls. Within the shelter of these parallels gun emplacements were thrown up, while from one parallel to the next ran zigzag lines of approach trenches, known as *saps*. By these means it was possible to get within a few hundred yards of the fortress before facing the deadly zone of cross-fire which had to be passed in order to gain the breach.

To the crash of the cannon-balls and the crackle of musketry there was now commonly added the more

awful roar of an exploding mine; whenever possible the assailants ran tunnels from their trenches with the object of blowing up part of the wall. The besieged had miners, too, partly to intercept the approaching tunnels, and sometimes with the hope of blowing up a line of saps. Subterranean encounters became quite common, with dagger, pistol, pickaxe and lantern; and many an unsung feat of arms occurred within the bowels of the earth. The art of siege warfare had attained thus far when, in June, 1779, there commenced the memorable four years' attack on Gibraltar.

Britain, after sowing the wind of discontent and rebellion in her North American colonies, had just reaped the whirlwind by losing them altogether. Her many European enemies seized the moment of her apparent distress to attack her simultaneously, and in particular France and Spain, which coveted the British fortresses of Minorca and Gibraltar respectively, let loose upon the island nation a flood of war. At Minorca the French succeeded, and their victorious army reinforced the Spaniards before Gibraltar, with what result we shall presently narrate.

Nature designed Gibraltar for a great fortress. On three sides of the Rock precipices rise straight from the sea, leaving only a narrow strand on the north-west, where the town nestles, and a tiny beach on the Mediterranean which holds the fishing village of Catalan Bay. The northern face of the mountain drops with equal abruptness to a sandy isthmus almost at sea-level, half a mile broad and about twice as long; beyond this isthmus rise the hills of Spain. In 1779, the Spanish side was bordered by a line of trenches and gun emplacements, with two strong stone forts. The isthmus itself, known as the Neutral Ground,

was partly occupied by vegetable gardens and other British property.

The hilly streets of the town, clustered at the north-west corner of the Rock, looked across a large bay to Algeciras, five and a half miles distant; the latter port, the headquarters of the Franco-Spanish fleets, was at that date quite out of range of the British guns. The whole of the Rock bristled with cannon. On the northern face, from about 400 feet above the isthmus almost to the summit rose battery after battery—the very top had a cannon in place; other batteries pointed towards the wall and bastion between isthmus and town, yet others guarded both the inner and outer harbours. At the northern end of the town the Old Mole stretched seawards; it was strongly fortified and could pour a terrible flanking fire upon any troops who attempted to cross the Neutral Ground. In addition to these artificial defences, Gibraltar was girdled at most points by offshore rocks that made landing dangerous and in places impossible; while the constant set of the strong current into the Mediterranean carried ships right past the guns of Europa Point, without their being able to wear about and return. Such was the place that Spanish pride, reinforced by 30,000 rather unwilling troops, intended to subjugate in 1779.

Gibraltar had been besieged a dozen times before, with varying success; the most memorable attack, perhaps, being the swift panther-spring of the British admiral Rooke, who in 1704 swooped down upon it unexpectedly and captured it with the loss of only sixty men, forty-two of whom perished through a single explosion. Seventy-five years had elapsed since then, during which France and Spain had made repeated efforts to reconquer the Rock, always with disastrous

results to themselves. Nor was their chance much better now, for the garrison, which mustered 4000 British and 1000 Hanoverians, was led by a most able and far-sighted commander, General Elliott, and made up in self-confidence for what it lacked in numbers. The British troops at Gibraltar during the famous siege comprised the 12th, 39th, 56th, 58th and 72nd Regiments of the Line, besides contingents of Artillery and Engineers.

For nearly two years the siege was little more than a close blockade, with a daily bombardment that ranged from a few aimless shots to a vicious cannonade from a hundred iron mouths at once. The place was so strong that even the heaviest fire had little effect (although its batteries at first were quite in the open), beyond the inevitable destruction of sandbag barricades and civilians' houses. Meanwhile a Spanish fleet under Admiral Barcelo did its best to intercept all shipping; despite which both British and foreign privateers often broke through, sometimes with news, sometimes with the more substantial freight of fresh food and meat for the famished garrison. There were hardships to be endured, of course, and belts had to be tightened, but the commander wisely shared with his men every privation and thereby stifled complaint. In January, 1780, things looked very bad. Many people were reduced to living on wild leeks and weeds, and a woman died of starvation, but soon afterwards Admiral Rodney, who on 8th January, had defeated a large Spanish squadron, came in to the port and re-provisioned it, only to leave it to its fate again a fortnight afterwards. During the period of extreme shortage, necessity prompted some Hanoverians to an ingenious method of speeding up the rate of chicken production. They placed the eggs in cotton wool,

in a tin case that was heated by a lamp or by hot water; when hatched, a capon was taught to rear them. "The feathers were plucked from his breast and belly; he was then gently scourged with a bunch of nettles and placed upon the young hatch, whose downy warmth afforded such comfort to the bared and smarting parts that he reared them up with the care and tenderness of a mother."

The English ships in the harbour comprised the *Panther* (sixty guns), the *Enterprise* frigate and some smaller craft, all of which the Spaniards planned to destroy by fire. A little before midnight on 7th June, the *Enterprise* watch discovered sail approaching the Mole. They were hailed and were soon seen to be six fireships in the form of a crescent, three being tied together by cables; the largest, a fifty-gun warship, was but little inferior to the *Enterprise* herself. The British at once opened fire, but the vessels, which now burst into flames, and were soon alight from stem to stern, drifted dangerously close. Boats were then launched, whose occupants, despite the tremendous heat and the ever-present risk of an explosion, approached the blazing hulls, slung chains aboard, and towed them clear of the harbour, where they burnt out harmlessly alongside the shore. Meanwhile the alarm had been given and the brazen voice of the batteries was now added to the general turmoil. With daybreak came a sense of relief; no attack followed the fireships, and the blackened remnants told their own tale of failure. By this brilliant little piece of work the navy had saved its fleet with nothing worse than a few burns.

Later during the same month the enemy devised a new annoyance, which soon proved to be exceedingly effective. They fitted a number of small boats, about 70 feet long and 20 feet wide, with a 26-pound

gun in the bow. These gunboats, carrying a lateen sail and a crew of oarsmen, stole over from their lair at Algeciras on every favourable night, fired a few rounds at the harbour or the town, and then vanished into the blackness. According to Drinkwater, who was present throughout, they were not once properly seen until the siege ended.

Meanwhile the Spaniards had, in true leisurely Spanish fashion, been building a strongly fortified line diagonally across the isthmus, equipped with fascines, emplacements and batteries of heavy guns; it was only 1100 yards from the Rock and was constructed mainly at night, despite a continual fire from the British. From this advantageous position the Spaniards twice tried to set fire to the defence works, but on each occasion the blaze was extinguished without difficulty. The enemy's best ally was *Hunger*, a friend that never failed them, for nearly a year had now elapsed since Rodney's visit and the garrison were again reduced to great distress. There was a constant stream of deserters, usually only one or two at a time, but by far the greater number of these unhappy men were either shot whilst trying to scurry across the isthmus or dashed to pieces during a foolhardy descent of the precipices. During these exacting days the general was everywhere, encouraging his men to bear their lot with patience, and himself neglecting nothing that prudence or foresight could devise.

It was with intense relief, however, that the garrison saw, on the 12th April, 1781, a new convoy approaching under Admiral Darby. It arrived during a thunderstorm, to which the roll of terrestrial artillery was added as the disappointed Spaniards sent over a vengeful hail of shell and ball from no fewer than 114 guns. A few days afterwards a second convoy appeared, and it

transpired that the prudent Elliott had ordered this to be sent from Minorca so secretly that not a soul in either fleet knew of the other's existence.

By this time the viciousness of the bombardment, coupled with frequent fires, had completely destroyed the town. The inhabitants took to tents and rude wooden shelters on the southern side of the fortress; but even there they were not safe, for sometimes Spanish shells, passing completely over the Rock, dropped among them and exploded. The ruined and abandoned town became the haunt of soldiers bent on pillage; any liquor found was eagerly consumed, and some men even died in a drunken stupor. Indiscipline and licentiousness increased at such a rate that the governor, though a just and humane man, had from time to time to sentence a culprit to death in order to maintain his authority. This evil was only internal, however; for the enemy the troops had nothing but contempt, and more lives were lost through disregard of the repeated orders to take cover than from any other cause. Some of the pilfering had a humorous side; thus, in the King's Bastion, which frequently came in for a heavy battering, many casks of flour had been built up into a temporary wall, and the men considered that every barrel burst by an enemy shot was a lawful prize, and they scooped out the contents and fried them into pancakes.

After the departure of the fleets the new supplies, which had been piled up on the shore, had to be got under cover amidst terrible storms of rain, thunder and lightning; these, coupled with the incessant flashes from the Spanish artillery, which sent over 1500 shells per day, made the scene a weird and awful one. Some of the balls struck the works with such force as to penetrate seven feet of solid sand-bag defence; but on the whole

the damage was remarkably slight, and its repair had become a regular routine job.

One amusing incident which is worth repeating occurred at this time. A soldier, while rambling round the town, found several watches and other valuables in a ruined house, and not knowing how to conceal them when searched that evening, he took out the wad of a gun at the harbour and thrust his wealth within it. The very same night gunboats came over from Algeciras, and this was one of the first cannon to be discharged against them!

The Spanish fire now died down until it had become a mere three shells per day, which the British irreverently nicknamed the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but even then a lucky shot occasionally brought about a strange result. For instance, on 15th August, a shell struck the Rock, and glancing off nearly at right angles, rolled down to one of the great 32-pounders, on the platform of which it burst, and a flying splinter fired the gun! A few days later a man was knocked down by the *wind* of a shell, which burst immediately afterwards and terribly mangled him.

During November a deserter reported that the Spanish fortified line across the isthmus, immensely strong though it looked, was so poorly guarded at night that it might be destroyed by a determined attack. Without trusting him completely, the governor decided to act on the hint. At midnight on 26th November, a large part of the garrison was secretly assembled into three columns facing the isthmus. The left, under Col. Trigger, was 955 strong, including 100 sailors; the right, Col. Hugo, mustered 661; while in the middle were 688 men under Dachenhausen and Maxwell, 150 being workmen with tools for demolishing the fortifications. Each soldier had thirty-

six rounds of ammunition, "with a good flint in his piece and another in his pocket". Elliott, who up till now had disclosed his plans to nobody, spent some hours in carefully explaining what was to be done, and he accompanied the little force when it sallied forth at a quarter to three in the morning.

Despite every precaution, they had not traversed the open ground before they were spotted by a sentry, who gave the alarm. Hugo, on the right, at once attacked, and rushing upon the works, gained a lodgment without opposition. While his pioneers commenced to demolish the works, the men of Hardenberg's regiment, which was attached to the same column but had lost its way, found themselves right in front of a battery; but despite some firing, they leaped over the parapet and drove the Spaniards out. At this moment the middle (Dachenhäusen's) column came up, and mistaking their friends for the enemy, fired upon them and wounded several before the mistake was discovered.

Everywhere the Spaniards fled, abandoning without a struggle all the mighty works that had taken so long to erect. The troops now spread out on the Spanish side, while the workmen behind them set fire to every part of the line. The crackling of wood, the columns of dense smoke, the weird glow and the half-illuminated figures formed an ideal target for the Spanish artillery; yet by some inexplicable mistake the enemy's guns, which could have blown the entire force to atoms, fired over their heads and directed a withering hail of ball and shell upon the grim, unresponsive fortress. Powder trains were now run to the magazines and ignited, and then, irreparable damage having been done, the retreat was sounded, and the various parties, without losing even an entrenching tool, slipped back

to Gibraltar unscathed, except that a Scot lost his kilt. Just as the last man gained safety a terrific roar from the isthmus announced that the principal Spanish magazine had gone up, throwing into the air vast pieces of timber which fell back among the blazing debris and added to the chaos. So great and unexpected had been this disaster that the enemy made no attempt to stem it.

This wonderful exploit took place within a few hundred yards of a permanently fortified position, where there were more than 20,000 soldiers and 135 heavy guns; yet the total loss to the British was only four privates killed, one officer and twenty-four other ranks wounded, and one missing. Twenty-eight guns were spiked in the works. Among the captures was the nightly report of the officer in charge, which unfortunately had been written in advance and read: "Nothing extraordinary has happened."

There were now signs of anxious days ahead for the garrison. Minorca fell to the French. The victorious general, the Duc de Crillon, was soon afterwards appointed to the supreme command, while the Franco-Spanish forces before Gibraltar mustered 40,000 bayonets. Up to this time, although the siege had lasted two and a half years, it had cost the garrison only 122 killed and 446 wounded, and their strength was still about 7000.

On New Year's Day, 1782, an artillery officer at Willis's Battery had a remarkable escape. A shell fell beside him, and he stepped behind a traverse for protection, but it came down, and he was entangled in the rubbish. One of the guard, named Martin, ran to his assistance, but being unable to get him free, called for help and another of the guard came up. Between them they hauled the officer out, and

almost at the same instant the shell burst and levelled the traverse with the ground. All three were uninjured.

Boys were employed to watch for the Spanish shells, two lads in the army being so extraordinarily quick-sighted that they could see the enemy's shot almost as soon as it left the gun. Despite their warning cries, however, there were frequent casualties, because the men had become over-confident and would not pay heed.

Early in the year the garrison received the components for eleven gunboats; when these had been assembled, they were mounted with one gun and twenty-one men each. They provided a welcome means of neutralizing to some extent the activities of the enemy's small craft.

Another innovation was to practise with red-hot shot, so as to set the enemy's works on fire. The first experiment was disastrous. While an artilleryman was putting in the shot, the fire accidentally reached the cartridge, and he was blown through the embrasure in fragments. Nevertheless the tests were continued and eventually produced some great results.

On the 11th June, the enemy made his most successful hit of the siege. A shell burst right in front of a magazine at Willis's Battery and blew it up. The explosion shook the entire Rock; fragments were hurled far out to sea; fourteen men were killed and fifteen were injured; and a mass of wreckage tumbled down to the Prince's Battery below. The door of a second magazine was also blown open, but fortunately the flame missed it.

Towards the end of this month the Duc de Crillon arrived. He began operations in true French style by a complimentary note to the governor, to whom he sent a present of fruit. Elliott's reply, though courteous,



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The siege of Gibraltar: Repulse of the floating batteries

was strictly correct, and the two antagonists, on whom by this time the eyes of all Europe were turned, set about exchanging weightier things than compliments.

The Spaniards had for some time been building ten large battering ships at Algeciras, but September had come before they were ready. They carried in all about 5000 men. Each ship had 142 heavy guns mounted for immediate use, with as many again in reserve. The vessels were reinforced with junk and other stuff on the sides, and they had bomb-proof and (as was firmly believed) fireproof curved tops above the decks. Although the formidable flotilla carried jury-masts, it was intended to tow it across, anchor close to the town, and by the sheer weight of its tremendous salvos reduce the batteries there to ruins. Behind the battering ships transports laden with soldiers were to wait until the critical moment when the English, as it was fondly hoped, would be reduced to stupefaction by the intensity of the gunfire; then a landing would be forced, and would be driven home by De Crillon's enormous numerical superiority of six to one.

General Elliott, however, had his own views and plans. He served out grates for heating red-hot shot, collected large stacks of ammunition, and calmly awaited the enemy's onslaught, without for an instant relaxing his own counter-offensive battering.

During these anxious days an artilleryman named Hartley performed a notable exploit. He was in the laboratory filling shells and driving fuses into them, when one of the loaded shells caught fire, and although he was surrounded by enough combustible material to have blown him to atoms, he picked up the burning shell, ran outside with it and flung it over the ramparts; two seconds later it exploded harmlessly. Had it

gone off a moment sooner, the loss of ammunition would have been irreparable.

On 8th September, a grand rehearsal with red-hot shot was tried, the Spanish lines across the isthmus being cannonaded from every available battery. After a time two batteries and part of the parallel caught fire, and although the French ventured into the deadly hail with the greatest intrepidity, and had 140 men killed and wounded, they could not extinguish the flames. During this cannonade two British officers had extraordinary escapes. Lieut. Boag was pointing a gun when a shell fell into the battery; as it burst, he threw himself under a gun and the explosion, firing the gun, deafened him for several days but otherwise missed him completely. Major Martin, of the same unit, was actually struck by a 26-pound shot, which carried away the cock of his hat close to the crown, but did no other damage.

The French were so mortified by this unexpected deluge of fire on their lines that De Crillon precipitately ordered a counterblast next day, of an intensity never seen in warfare before. No fewer than 186 of their pieces were employed, there being at times between ten and twenty shells in the air simultaneously. The Rock was surrounded with smoke and flashes, like a sombre giant half-illuminated by countless shooting stars. But during recent months the British miners had been busy, and many of the guns now reposed within the solid rock; galleries had been cut for the artillerymen behind them, and although the enemy's fire wrecked the old exposed platforms, the material damage to the defence was trifling. Meantime, by way of a diversion, nine line-of-battle ships sailed over from Algcciras, and passing along the face of the Rock, discharged their broadsides at the bat-

teries, then turned about at Europa Point and repeated the performance. They were supported by a swarm of gunboats, but they met with such an unexpectedly stinging reception that they soon withdrew, the smaller vessels in great disorder.

The crisis of the siege was now approaching, and the governor, anticipating the grand assault, ordered the furnaces and grates at the New Mole to be lighted; but the attack was withheld for the moment.

Towards dusk the rain of cannon-balls slackened; on the other hand, the enemy's shells increased, and, being fitted with short fuses, they mostly burst in the air, right over the heads of the British.

Next day (11th), the cannonade was especially directed to destroy the chevaux-de-frises and palisades which barred the way from the isthmus to the Old Mole and the town. The whole of the timber-work caught fire and burnt itself out in one tremendous conflagration. During the afternoon detachments of soldiers were observed to be boarding the ships at Algeciras; at nightfall the enemy's gunboats and mortars came over and added their quota to the general din. Nevertheless the chief weapon—the battering ships—was still held back, De Crillon waiting until he could be quite sure that the British had become demoralized by the incessant bombardment. His batteries were now firing the enormous number of 4000 rounds every twenty-four hours. Day and night the thunder never ceased; day and night the Rock, like a crouching lion, was buried in smoke, punctuated by the flashes of bursting shells. It seemed to the observers outside as if nothing human could survive such a pounding. Yet with calm unconcern the British gunners continued to load and fire strictly as ordered, cooling their hot weapons with buckets

of water, and by no means either demoralized or pounded out of existence.

At about 8 a.m. on the 12th a large fleet appeared in the straits, comprising seven three-deckers and twenty-one two-deckers, flying the colours of France and Spain, and accompanied by many smaller warships. They anchored off Algeciras, having come to witness the downfall of Gibraltar. There were now opposed to the garrison, besides the great number of land batteries, the guns of forty-seven sail of the line, ten battering ships (deemed invincible), and innumerable gunboats and similar craft; likewise 40,000 troops, commanded by a victorious general, with two French princes of the blood and many other nobility. On the other side stood 7000 veterans of the siege, skilfully led, resolute and defiant. While watching the enemy's ships arrive the British suddenly burst into cheers as the signal for a fleet was hoisted at the summit of the Rock. It was believed at the time that a pursuing British fleet had been sighted, but in reality the signal was only an eagle, which, after perching upon the flagstaff, flew away again.

Next day, 13th, the battering ships got under way with a gentle breeze from the north-west; they were attended by a number of small craft, and as they edged across towards the town the grates and furnaces at the batteries were rekindled. At a little after 9 a.m. the flotilla bore down on Gibraltar in admirable order; the admiral, in a two-decker, mooring about 900 yards off the King's Bastion, the others successively taking up their stations on his right and left in a masterly manner; the most distant was only about 1100 yards from the shore. Meanwhile, the British, standing in strict and menacing silence at their guns—that "terrible silence" of the British army just before

zero hour—stood waiting. At a quarter to ten, just as the first ship dropped her anchor, Elliott gave a single order, and there broke out, from every bastion and emplacement, from every hole in the Rock, and from behind the deserted platforms, a fire so terrible and concentrated as no ships had ever endured before. The reply was as furious, and it was supported simultaneously from all the Spanish land batteries; but the British wisely disregarded the latter completely, and bent all their energies upon destroying the fleet. Hundreds of brazen mouths were belching forth flame and smoke at the same instant; hundreds of missiles were hissing, shrieking, or dropping, with the peculiar whistle of shells, upon their objectives. Hour after hour the din of exploding shells and the dull thud of cannon-balls continued; the sickening smash of the shot, the wreaths of smoke, the backlash of the recoiling guns, the men stripped to the waist, sweaty, grimed and toiling like demons, made up a picture that might have stepped out of Dante's *Inferno*. After some hours it began to dawn on the garrison how really formidable the floating batteries were. "The heaviest shells", says Drinkwater, "often rebounded from their tops, while the massive 32-pound shot seemed incapable of making any impression on their reinforced hulls." Frequently small fires broke out; but men were waiting below with water and squirts, and wherever smoke appeared the conflagration was immediately dowsed with water. At about noon the garrison commenced to use red-hot shot, but not till 2 o'clock was it generally employed, and even then for a long time it had no effect. At noon, too, the enemy's gunboats and mortar vessels made an attempt to aid the attack, but a heavy swell had come on, which equally prevented them from approach-

ing the shore and the British from leaving the port.

Incessant showers of hot shot, carcasses, shells, missiles of every species that could be crammed into a gun, now flew upon the battering-ships; and the din within them must have been appalling. Several had their masts shot away. The rigging of all was wrecked. They were compelled to triumph or perish, but they gave no sign of despair, but grimly and repeatedly discharged their salvoes against the terrible hidden batteries of the fortress.

As the afternoon wore on, it became clearer and clearer which side would prevail. Both the flagship and her nearest neighbour repeatedly took fire, each successive outburst more difficult to control than the last. The cannonade from other vessels began to diminish; then it dropped to spasmodic and angry bursts; and by 8 p.m. it had entirely ceased, except for the two ships nearest the Spanish lines, which had been the least engaged. The British fire, on the other hand, was now rising to an awful climax. The plight of the ships was frightful to contemplate. They could no longer sail away, and when they made rocket signals for assistance, the British opened fire on every boat which tried to reach them, sinking many and making anything like a general rescue impossible. An indistinct clamour, mingled with lamentable cries and groans from the panic-stricken and the wounded, floated through the smoky air to the shore, and the exultant gunners, knowing that the end was now in sight, redoubled their efforts. A little before midnight one vessel, completely wrecked, floated in beneath the town wall; it contained only twelve men, the sole survivors. The admiral himself abandoned his ship soon afterwards.

Meanwhile from the batteries of the town the rain

of hot shot continued unabated. About an hour after midnight one ship was completely in flames, and by 2 a.m. she appeared as one continuous blaze from end to end. The next to the south was also afire, but burnt less rapidly. The light from these stupendous torches enabled the artillery to be directed on the fleet with the greatest accuracy; even the rocks and other distant objects were vividly illuminated, and it may be imagined with what feelings the host of enemy observers saw their great project go up in smoke. Between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. six more ships were thoroughly alight.

At about 3 a.m. Brigadier Curtis launched his twelve gunboats from the New Mole, drawing them up in such a manner as to screen the blazing vessels and to prevent the enemy's gunboats from approaching them. As the day broke he ventured close to the flaming hulls and captured two launches full of survivors; learning from these people that there were still many men on board, he determined to attempt their rescue, but they had been taught that the English would kill them and many refused to jump till it was too late. Some were carried off, however, when the work of mercy was brought to an abrupt close. At about 5 a.m. one of the ships blew up with a tremendous report; fifteen minutes later a second did likewise. The wreckage of the latter was hurled upwards and outwards over a vast area, and tumbling down among the British boats involved them and their prisoners in a common peril. One boat was sunk, but the crew were saved. A projectile drove a hole clean through the bottom of the Brigadier's boat, his coxswain was killed and his strokesman wounded. He therefore gave the order to draw off, having saved nine officers, two priests and 334 soldiers and seamen, all Spaniards.

Famous Sieges

These rescues excited the admiration even of the enemy.

The situation of those who had been abandoned in the blazing ships was now terrible indeed. Some were crying from amid the flames for pity and assistance; others flung themselves into the sea and were drowned; a few swam ashore; yet more made a perilous passage to the land on bits of floating wreckage. Of the eight ships which still remained, three blew up before 11 a.m.; three others were burnt to the water's edge, their officers having taken the precaution of damping the magazines before abandoning them. The admiral's flag was on board one of the latter and was burnt with her. One of the two most distant ships, which were the last to succumb, unexpectedly burst into flames during the morning, and blew up with a terrific report; the other was captured, but was burnt by the British afterwards. Then at last, amid the ringing cheers of the dauntless defenders of Gibraltar, General Elliott, who had stood on the King's Bastion, in the midst of the heaviest cannonade, for many of those momentous hours, went back to his quarters, certain that the fortress was impregnable.

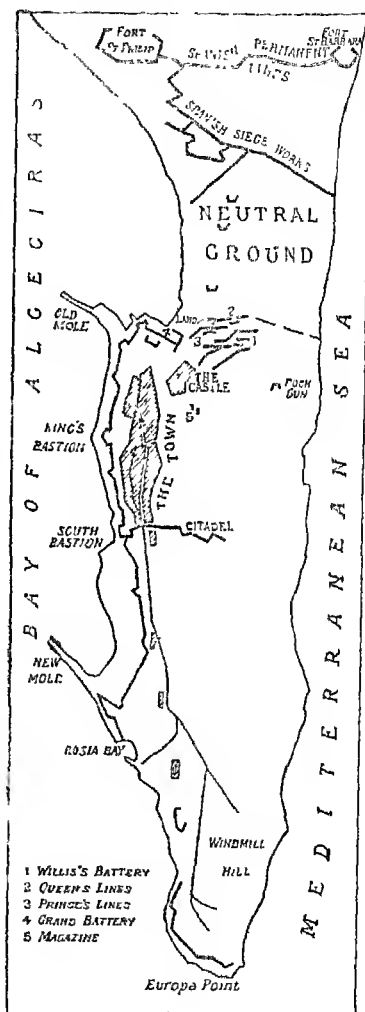
And so thought the enemy too. His losses had been extremely high—not less than 2000 men were killed, besides the toll of prisoners and the destruction of the fleet. On the other side of the account there was nothing to show. The garrison had lost but a single officer and fifteen men, with sixty-eight wounded; the long-held doctrine that forts properly defended cannot be taken by bombardment from the sea was triumphantly vindicated. Nevertheless the siege still dragged on, with a bombardment that occasionally rose to an angry crescendo of 2000 balls a day, only to die away into futile spluttering once more. At the

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end of October Lord Howe, who had for some time been in the offing, provided the third relief of the fortress, and thereafter the operations dwindled to a mere blockade. Rumours of peace now reached the besieged from many quarters, and at last, on 6th February, 1783, De Crillon informed the governor that a general peace had been proclaimed.

So ended the great siege of Gibraltar. What the islanders had pounced upon nearly eighty years before they had held against the armed might of Europe, and from that day to this no further effort has been made to wrest it from them.



CHAPTER VII

Bonaparte at Acre

We return to the East, to the town of Acre, before whose walls, often crumbling and as often renewed, battle had been joined repeatedly for more than 3000 years. It was now to become the scene of a siege, short indeed yet of intense interest, the result of which probably affected the entire history of the Old World.

In 1798, although only fifteen years had elapsed since the fragments of Gibraltar were darting into the air, a vast change had come over Europe. The French Revolution had transformed men's thoughts into two warring camps, and the ragged, half-fed, plundering, but heroic battalions of the young Republic had carried a more substantial war, along with the tri-colour and the Marseillaise, into places hitherto deemed beyond their farthest ambitions. The boldest, most original, and most successful of her generals was young Napoleon Bonaparte, a veteran of many campaigns although still but twenty-nine years old. His power having become a menace to the French government, they removed him and his army to what they thought was a safe distance, by ordering an attack on hated Albion through Egypt, the stepping-stone to India. Bonaparte, with 40,000 men, succeeded in evading Nelson's cruisers, and landing at Alexandria, occupied the Land of the Pharaohs by a war of pure conquest.

Now Turkey was (nominally, at any rate) the owner

of Egypt. The Porte prepared to enforce its rights by attacking the invaders simultaneously with a fleet at Aboukir and an army which was being assembled in Syria. Bonaparte determined to forestall this plan by an attack of his own, and as the land menace appeared to be the more urgent, he led a large part of his army into Syria, with the object of destroying the concentrations of Turkish troops at Acre and Damascus before they could combine. He may also have had at the back of his mind a triumphal march across Asia before which the exploits of Alexander the Great would pale. But at Acre his plans received a fatal check from two obstinate men; one a long-bearded and ferocious old Turk, Achmed Pasha, who from his atrocities was known as Djezzar or "The Butcher"; and the other a brilliant if somewhat happy-go-lucky British sailor, answering to the name of Smith.

Early in February, 1799, Bonaparte set out from Cairo with 13,000 men, commanded by generals who subsequently became the scourge of Europe—Lannes, Régnier, Murat—as well as the heroic but self-willed Kléber. A novelty of the expedition was a dromedary detachment, comprising a squadron of those "ships of the desert", each of which mounted two men. But for most of the troops the long, toilsome drag through the sandy, waterless desert into Palestine had to be accomplished on foot, and the young general marched on foot beside them, his small, wiry body indifferent alike to fatigue or the sun. Up to this date Bonaparte had never failed in any warlike venture; his men felt that with their power and his genius all the world lay at the ends of their bayonets. Their self-esteem was enhanced when El Arish and Jaffa, two important coastal towns, were successively stormed. At Jaffa, however, they caught the plague,

and Bonaparte had to establish a hospital there, in which he left many sick. On account of transport difficulties, too, he also left here his heavy siege guns, with orders that they should be sent along the coast by water.

At last the long blue column of perspiring infantry, passing the height of Carmel, came in sight of Acre. Here the Butcher had determined to make a stand, with a large force and all his treasure. As the French marched along the shore, a salute of cannon balls from the sea announced a second enemy, in the shape of two English warships which were lying off the town.

Acre, like everything else under Turkish rule, had fallen into decay, but these two ships, the *Theseus* and *Tiger*, under Commodore Sir Sidney Smith, arrived there a couple of days before Bonaparte. There was on board a French royalist engineer named Phélippeaux, who, singularly enough, had been at school with the boy Napoleon, and the English sailor and French refugee now did that ambitious man a mortal injury, by inducing Djezzar to let them put the town in some state of defence. Meanwhile the Butcher sat in the market-place, offering a reward for every French head which should be brought to him.

Now, the Turk is one of the finest fighters in the world behind earthworks, as many nations, including the British, have learned to their cost, and when the tired and thirsty, but jubilant, French tried to hurry matters at Acre they rushed upon destruction. Their original trench of approach was a mere shallow ditch, only knee-high, and it was not until they had suffered several repulses and much loss that they fell back upon the elementary principles of the besieger's art and began a regular investment. Moreover, they underwent a tremendous handicap at the outset. Sir

Sidney Smith, perceiving that the French did not return his fire, jumped to the conclusion (which of course was correct) that they had no heavy artillery. He knew that Bonaparte was not the man to undertake such an enterprise without artillery. The *Theseus* was accordingly sent off to watch the coast, and sure enough, they soon discovered, creeping along beneath Mount Carmel, nine laden vessels, six of which were captured, with the whole of the siege train. Thus the very means upon which Bonaparte had relied for reducing Acre proved in his enemies' hands to be the principal agent of its preservation.

The French now possessed but a single 32-pounder, with four 12-pounders and thirty-eight light guns. They were even short of cannon-balls, a reward of five sous being offered for every ball retrieved from the English cannonade, and as the ships fired at such long range as to cause practically no casualties to men on the beach, the French freely exposed themselves with the double aim of obtaining money for themselves and ammunition for their general.

With this meagre equipment a breach was made, when it was discovered that through the inexcusable carelessness of the reconnoitring officer, a ditch and counterscarp in front of the wall had been overlooked. Mining was therefore resorted to, and on 28th March part of the counterscarp was blown up, thus giving access to the moat. A forlorn hope of twenty-five grenadiers, led by Mailly, rushed to the breach, followed by a storming party. They mounted the wall and drove the Turks back; but then, when the place seemed theirs, a lucky ball laid the brave Mailly low, his men hesitated, and the Turks, recovering, thrust them out again; nor could repeated efforts make any further impression.

The garrison now received by the sea a reinforcement of several thousand men, with a great supply of ammunition; while the inland army was now on the march to their relief from Damascus. The French, lying between two forces each much larger than their own, appeared to be in a hopeless position; yet Bonaparte refused even for a moment to release his grip on Acre. He sent off Kléber's division post-haste into the interior, and a furious sally by the Turks upon his weakened lines was as furiously repulsed, the ground outside the town being littered with their dead in hundreds.

On 19th April, while the advanced guard of 500, under Junot, was advancing along the Nazareth road, it fell in with the head of the Turkish army, a horde of 25,000 men under Abdallah Pasha. There followed a classic battle in miniature. Junot, forming his little band into a square, resisted all attacks for some time, but slowly withdrew towards his main force, and as night came on the warring masses neared Mount Tabor. Kléber, who had scarcely 3000 bayonets and practically no cavalry, planned to attack the Turks next morning, but they forestalled him, and he found them drawn up in battle array, 15,000 infantry and 12,000 horse. The French were accordingly formed into a square, which resisted several charges by the Turkish cavalry. Meanwhile, Bonaparte, who had learned the great superiority of the enemy, was coming up rapidly with Bon's division; he formed them up, out of sight of the Turks, into two small squares, so placed that with Kléber's square the three formed the points of an equilateral triangle, the enemy being in the middle. Bonaparte then ordered his few four-pounders to open fire on the close masses of the enemy; the three squares took up the work with volley after

volley of musketry and the astonished Turks, assailed thus by fire from all quarters, and seized with panic, fled pell-mell, only for many of them to fall before the sabres of Murat and his chasseurs, who were across their line of retreat on the Jordan. This danger thus disposed of, Bonaparte returned to the siege of Acre.

On 7th May a fresh fleet of transports sailed into the harbour, but Bonaparte, who hoped by prompt measures to snatch a victory before the additional troops could land, ordered an immediate assault for the same night. His artillery was concentrated before a different part of the wall and a breach battered; before dawn the grenadiers assaulted it with irresistible élan, bayoneted the Turks, and swept with them into the town. But the streets had been barricaded, and behind this shelter the Turks now hung on with great tenacity; meanwhile, help was sent for, and Sidney Smith himself came up, with a company of British sailors, who at push of pike held back the French until their allies had regained some state of order. A desperate struggle now occurred. Neither side would yield. Neither could advance. But the Turks perceived that by weight of numbers they might cut off the storming party from the thin trickle of reinforcements that was coming up to it, and by a sudden irruption they cut off all the French who were in the town and regained possession of the breach. In vain did all the skill and brains in the French army endeavour to overcome this disaster; Bonaparte himself, Lannes, Kléber, Duroc, none could overcome the solid wall of savage humanity which lined the breach, pouring down upon them a deadly and concentrated fire of musketry and ball. Lannes and Duroc were wounded, the former seriously; Kléber, whose giant figure could long be discerned on

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the slope, gesticulating and swearing like a trooper, bore a charmed life, and escaped unharmed. But in the end they had to withdraw, and those within the town were left, temporarily at any rate, to their fate. On the 10th another assault was organized; it was repulsed as decisively as the last. Meanwhile, those within the town had captured a ruined tower, which they held with grim tenacity for two whole days. Then, their ammunition exhausted, tormented with hunger and thirst, and many of them wounded, they surrendered to Sir Sidney Smith; not daring to entrust their lives to the bloodthirsty Djezzar.

Even Bonaparte realized now that the odds were too great for mortal skill to overcome. Every day was adding to the strength and audacity of the defence; every day was increasing his own difficulties, with failing supplies and increasing casualties. The wounded, ill provided for at best, were now in a frightful plight. The Turkish fleet was believed to be already near Alexandria, where, by a successful landing, it might cut off the survivors before they could regain their base in Egypt. Of the 12,000 Frenchmen who had set out three months before, with such high hopes, one-third were dead. There were 1200 wounded in the camp before Acre, besides numerous cases of plague, both there and at Jaffa. Bonaparte accepted the inevitable; the order was given to retreat. Every horse that could be commandeered was used for the wounded; the general himself walked on foot with his men, a silent witness of their sufferings as they trailed through the desert.

It was Acre that ended his dreams of oriental conquest, whatever they might have been. But it was also Acre which brought him back, to be for fourteen years the glory of France and the scourge of Europe.

CHAPTER VIII

The Siege of Sebastopol

During the next fifty years the political whirligig transformed old friends into enemies and age-long foes into comrades in arms. Russia, which had helped so greatly to destroy the Napoleonic empire, had now, by reason of her continual thirst for new territory, antagonized both France and England too and when she began an unjust war against Turkey, with the avowed object of seizing Constantinople and closing the Black Sea, the two great western powers declared war upon her (March, 1854). The Russians lay astride the Danube near its mouth, and as the Turks, who were defending Silistria, appeared to be hard pressed, a joint Franco-British army was sent thither, under the independent leadership of Marshal St. Arnaud and Lord Raglan; but so deliberately that the Russians had been repulsed from Silistria and were again north of the Danube, when the allied fleet disembarked the troops at Varna, below the great river's mouth. As no definite plan of campaign had been projected, and it was not thought wise to cross the Danube, this fine army of 60,000 men—Turks, French and British—was left for months in the pestilential country near Varna, ravaged by cholera and fast losing both discipline and morale.

Proposals were now made to send the army across the Black Sea to the Crimea, with the idea of surprising Sebastopol, and although practically nothing

was known about the conditions there, and the allied fleets, after a brief reconnaissance and an exchange of shots with the batteries, reported that a naval attack was out of the question, the expedition was pressed ahead; the generals received their orders, and early in the autumn of 1854 a huge flotilla of transports assembled at Varna. In this haphazard way began the Crimean War, an undertaking ill planned and ill executed from start to finish, which was to cost many thousands of lives and an immense treasure, with no tangible results whatsoever. Of this war the siege of Sebastopol—which we will now recount in outline—was at once the centre-piece and mainspring.

The Crimea is a diamond-shaped peninsula, a little larger than Wales. Sebastopol lies in its mountainous southern part, near the western point of the diamond; the famous harbour forming an inlet four miles long and a mile wide, to which hills slope down from the north and south, together with numerous steep ravines. The town lay on the southern side of this inlet, upon the slope of a chalk hill; its arsenal and docks, which had cost millions of pounds, had been constructed by an Englishman named Upton. A large fleet lay at anchor within the Harbour, which was defended at its mouth by the Quarantine Battery, 50 guns; Fort Alexander, 64 guns, and Fort Constantine, an immense work with 104 guns. The Inner Harbour was also commanded by Fort Nicholas, which mounted nearly 200 guns. Most of these forts were casemated, while some of them were built in tiers, with row above row of frowning cannon. But the *pièce de résistance* was the Star Fort, which crowned a hill on the north shore, impregnable from the sea and not easily assailable by land. This work overlooked all the other defences and was the true citadel.

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Ample advertisement having been given of the allies' intentions, Sebastopol was soon put into a state of preparedness; except that on the southern (town) side it was as yet defended only by a low, loopholed wall, most of the forts facing the other way. This was the place to which fate and two obtuse governments were now directing powerful armies, under the delusive hope that it might be "taken by surprise".

The flotilla crossed the Black Sea unopposed, and the troops were landed without difficulty at Eupatoria, on a low sandy plain some thirty miles north of the fortress (14th September). Originally they numbered 27,000 British and 24,000 French. The latter were well supplied with everything, but the British had not even tents; the medical equipment was deplorable. Six days later, while advancing along the shore towards Sebastopol they encountered the main Russian army at the Alma River; it was commanded by General Menschikoff, and it lay along the edge of the plateau which, rising like a wall beyond the Alma, led to the city. After a glorious battle for the allies, the Russians were driven off in disorder, partly upon Sebastopol and partly towards their other base at Kertch, near the opposite point of the diamond. It was claimed that a speedy advance upon Sebastopol at this moment might have enabled the allies to enter the city along with the flying and disheartened foe, but there was a shortage of cavalry for the pursuit; moreover, Raglan would not abandon his many wounded without embarking them. This loss of time was followed by a grave mistake. If the citadel fell the whole place must fall too; but the citadel was reputed to be impregnable, while the allies were most concerned to keep in constant touch with their fleet (whence they drew all supplies), an operation much

easier to accomplish with the numerous harbours available south of Sebastopol. The troops were accordingly marched right round the city, taking up their position on the plateau which overlooked it from the south. From this it resulted that when, after a year's almost incredible labour and loss, the southern defences were overwhelmed, the Russians merely crossed the Harbour to the Star Fort, where they were again in an unassailable position. However, we anticipate.

From their new position the allies could look down upon the town, which was still protected mainly by the low wall already mentioned; but the difficulty of landing heavy guns at Balaklava and Kamiesch Bays, and the still greater difficulty of dragging those ponderous weapons up muddy lanes to the plateau, allowed the Russians several weeks, during which Captain Todleben, a brilliant young engineer, erected a range of batteries over the whole five miles from Artillery Bay to Careening Bay. These new works mostly comprised earthen forts on elevated points outside the city wall—Flagstaff Battery, the Garden Battery, the Barrack Battery, the Malakoff and the saw-tooth shaped Redan; later the Mamelon hill was added to this formidable list.

The French held the left of the allied line, with Kamiesch Bay as their base; the British, separated from them by a deep ravine, held rougher ground opposite the Malakoff and Redan, with the convenient Balaklava Harbour some six miles in their rear. Still farther to the right, where Sebastopol Harbour ends in the muddy mouth of the Tchernaya River, the French had two divisions under Bosquet; here, at the hill of Inkermann, the allied lines ended. No attempt was made to occupy the north shore, so that the

defenders of Sebastopol were relieved on that side without let or hindrance. From Inkermann to Balaklava Bay an entrenchment was thrown up and manned by the Turks, so as to keep out the large Russian forces which were prowling about, much too near Sebastopol for the liking of the allied generals.

The work of cutting saps and parallels from the camps to the fortress proceeded very slowly; it had to be done mostly at night, in very hard ground, and with constant interruptions due to raids from the enemy. Nevertheless, in a single night 2400 Frenchmen, standing in a line 20 inches apart, dug a trench and built a parapet three-quarters of a mile long and 1000 yards from the forts; embrasures were afterwards made, guns mounted, and the works faced with fascines and gabions.

The first great bombardment occurred on 17th October, both by sea and land. At dawn the British fleet, which included several armoured steamers, appeared north of the harbour, and the French from the south; the harbour itself was closed, the enemy having deliberately sunk a number of his warships in the entrance, so as to impede ingress. For five hours twenty-six ships of the line then carried on an intense artillery duel with the seaward-facing forts. Many of the ships were too far away for their fire to be effective; but Sir Ed. Lyons' flagship, the *Agamemnon*, with the *Ferrible*, *Sanspareil*, *Samson* and *Tribune* went closer in; they were fearlessly followed by the unprotected *Queen*, which drew from the admiral the signal "Well done, *Queen*!" This squadron anchored within half a mile of Fort Constantine, with which a tremendous fire was exchanged for more than two hours, the ships receiving besides the fire from the Star Fort and the batteries on the hill. The *Queen*, set on fire by a

red-hot shot, had to retire; but the *Agamemnon* and *Sanspareil* remained at their stations until nightfall, and then the *Sanspareil* could not move when she would. She was rapidly becoming a wreck, when the little *Shark*, a steam tug whose captain had received the order: "Go in to aid the *Sanspareil*; you will find there a coffin or your promotion," advancing in the teeth of the batteries, was lashed alongside the huge vessel, and towed her out of danger. The *Agamemnon* received sixteen shots near the water line; her masts, sails and rigging were perforated in all directions, and her mainsail had been three times on fire. The other vessels were also much knocked about. Forty-four British sailors were killed, 266 wounded; the loss of the French was little less. The bombardment must be accounted a failure, for the forts remained practically undamaged.

At the same time a tremendous cannonade opened upon Sebastopol from all the land batteries, after weeks of preparation, during which the enemy's gunfire had remained unanswered. Now, commencing at 6.30 a.m., no fewer than 126 pieces, including several 68-pounders, hurled their metal upon the Russians, who replied with equal energy. The enemy's fire, in fact, was unexpectedly severe. Canister shot skimmed over the parapets and came through the embrasures; and in addition to the land batteries, the *Twelve Apostles*, a 120-gun ship, was careened in the harbour, so as to enable her enormous armament to bear upon the British. At about 10 a.m. a large magazine in the middle of the French batteries blew up, and the shortage of ammunition thereafter almost paralysed their gunfire for the rest of the day. The British, on the other hand, maintained the duel until nightfall, the guns being continuously worked by sailors under

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Captains Lushington and Peel and by the Royal Artillery under Lt.-Col. Gambier. One extensive explosion followed a lucky hit behind one of the Russian batteries; their guns, too, were sometimes silenced and their works destroyed, with casualties exceeding 500. Nevertheless, the results did not justify the expenditure of ammunition, and the works were afterwards repaired more speedily than the allies could bring up material to organize a fresh bombardment.

The very next day Menschikoff returned the bombardment with interest. Meanwhile, his friends in the east, under General Liprandi, had been planning an attack on the allied rear with 30,000 men. They captured some redoubts from the Turks, and this brought on the scattered Battle of Balaklava, with its two memorable cavalry charges. In the first encounter the Heavy Brigade—Dragoons and Scots Greys—under Scarlett, swept down like a whirlwind upon three times their number of Russian horse, whom they routed utterly. In the second, the Light Brigade, owing to a mistaken order, charged at some captured guns across a perfectly open plain, and despite the enemy's terrible fire reached the guns and sabred the gunners, but being unsupported they were compelled to retreat again through a hail of fire, during which they suffered heavily.

A battle of a different nature took place a few days later, when on 5th November the enemy made a tremendous attack with 60,000 men upon the extreme right of the British line, which then clung to the heights of Inkermann, overlooking the Tchernaya valley. Here the British, who at first mustered but a few thousands and never totalled more than 8000, had to maintain themselves for the greater part of the day in desperate hand-to-hand fighting with many times

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their number; odds so fearful, indeed, that they must have succumbed, had not their own genius for individual combat, coupled with a dense fog and the Russian mistake of advancing in close columns, somewhat lessened the disparity. As it was, late in the afternoon Bosquet's 6000 Frenchmen were thrown into the battle, and this turned the scale, the discomfited Russians abandoning the action, and leaving 5000 of their own dead on the field. After Inkermann, Lord Raglan, who had really done very little during the battle, was created a Field-Marshal.

This was the last great battle outside the city for many a month; trench warfare, however, continued unceasingly. On a hill outside the town and opposite the British lines stood a small white tower, the Malakoff; around this the Russians constructed an immense circular mound, with 30 heavy guns; while in the neighbouring Redan they placed weapons which threw 110-lb. shot—enormous missiles for that period. In the face of these discouragements, coupled with an extremely severe winter, the trenches had to be manned continuously, while the sap lines crept slowly nearer and nearer to the forts which were their objectives. There were now scarcely enough uninjured British for this duty alone. The supplies of every kind were of the poorest. The field hospitals were full of wounded, who had to lie in the mud and slush, on the freezing ground, and could not be discharged from the overcrowded harbour of Balaklava before their wounds turned to gangrene. When these poor fellows, after an agonizing passage across the Black Sea, packed in transports like sardines, were unloaded at Scutari, opposite Constantinople, it was only to enter infected hospitals whence many of them never emerged alive. These scandals presently brought to

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the fore the heroic figure of Florence Nightingale, whose deathless story is the one bright light in the tragedy of the Crimea.

To add to the universal misery, the plateau was visited nine days after Inkermann by a terrific hurricane, following upon a night of torrential rain that had converted the surface into a slithering mass of mud and water. As the rain went down on that grey November morning the wind got up, piercingly cold, roaring over the plateau like a hungry lion, snapping tent poles and sweeping the canvas away from the unprotected owners, picking up clothes, tables, bedding, even articles which weighed more than 2 cwt., and whirling them away towards Sebastopol Harbour. Comedy and tragedy stalked side by side. A brigadier hung like grim death to the back stay of his marquee, while a general sat speechless amid the wreckage of his. A captain, chasing a cap through the rain like a maniac, retrieved it from the mud only to find that it was not his own. The hospital marquee was carried away, ambulances being overturned and wounded men actually blown off them. At Balaklava, where frightful confusion reigned, many tents were blown over the cliffs into the sea.

More than twenty ships had been anchored outside Balaklava Harbour, waiting their turn to unload, when the tempest struck them. Transport after transport was torn from her anchors and beached or sunk, often with the loss of the entire crew. The *Prince*, a brand-new screw steamer of the latest type, laden with a quarter of a million pounds' worth of food, clothing and supplies of every kind, tried to steam out to sea, but her mast, tumbling down, became entangled with the screw, and the helpless vessel, driven on to the rocks, broke her back and sank. Everything was lost,

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including 153 out of her 160 people. From nine wrecks there were only 23 survivors in all. The battle-fleets west of Sebastopol fared almost as badly, and one French 100-gun ship, the *Henri Quatre*, was driven ashore and wrecked near Eupatoria, fortunately without loss of life.

The winter proved an awful trial. Balaklava, in particular, became a pest-house of filth, disorder and disease, and the road down to it was so bad that the commissariat failed; men had to walk there six miles from the lines for a few supplies and then back again with their load, ploughing through black, tenacious mud. Although there was ample timber for huts at the port it was too heavy to carry away, and most of it was burnt as firewood by the men who were shivering in their threadbare canvas. Officers and men alike were frequently reduced to rags. The plight of the wounded went from bad to worse, and to get them down from the overcrowded hospitals to the ships proved a nightmare journey, each patient having to be slung across a mule. One officer wrote home, without unduly exaggerating the state of things: "There was nothing to eat, nothing to drink, no commissariat, no medicine, no clothes, no management, nothing abundant but cholera."

At last, however, spring arrived, bringing the promise of better times. A light railway was built in April from Balaklava to the base, and this removed many of the worst difficulties of transport; the stores of ammunition began to accumulate; and the numbers of the besiegers became astonishing, until by the end of the siege the French alone had 190,000 men before Sebastopol. On the other hand, the task which had been set them by other men's thoughtless folly became worse instead of easier.

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The recently fortified Malakoff and the sharp-angled Redan dominated the junction between the British and French lines. About one-third of a mile in front of those works, and only 400 yards from the French trenches, was a rounded, flat-topped hill, the Mamelon; its summit, which was covered with loose stones, stood considerably above the French lines, and was not occupied by either side. On the night of 22nd February, Todleben, who had perceived its usefulness, sent up this hill an immense body of workmen, under cover of a thick mist, and in a single night they had transformed it into a fortified work, faced with gabions, behind which trenches were dug and gun platforms laid.

The French at once decided to attack this mushroom growth, but unfortunately their plans were betrayed to the enemy by a deserter. That very night two battalions of Zouaves, one of French infantry, one of marines, and 300 chasseurs—2500 men in all, under General Monet—attacked the Mamelon. It was a dark and windy night. The assailants were allowed to cross the open ground and to clamber over the wet stones to within 20 yards of the top, when a sharp command was heard, followed by a terrific volley of musketry which levelled the leading files. Those behind rushed on. The Zouaves, leaping the parapet, captured the crest and about half the work; but now they were exposed to the fire of the Malakoff, while two bodies of Russians, each 2000 strong, marched out from that fort and attacked them in flank. Those who stood on the slope wavered, then broke and fled, pursued by the Russian bayonets, but those who had entered the fort held their ground. General Monet was wounded in the shoulder and had his right hand shattered by a grenade. After a desperate struggle the

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Russians were completely ejected, but the hail of shot, shell and rockets from the Malakoff and the Redan upon the shelterless men was intolerable, and after half an hour of it Monet ordered a retreat. The Russians tried to charge them off the slope, during which Monet was wounded for the third time. At length the French regained their trenches and the enemy reoccupied the Mamelon. This affair cost the French 600 killed and wounded.

Rifle pits now formed an ever-increasing annoyance. They were holes in the ground, faced with sandbags, loopholed for rifles, and banked with earth, which had been constructed by the Russians on the slopes leading up to the forts, and sometimes quite close to the French and British trenches. Each pit held eight to ten men, who picked off every bold or careless fellow in sight, with such effect, in fact, that the loss during the ceaseless struggle for possession of these pits is said to have equalled that incurred in the grand assaults on the forts.

At the end of March the command of Sebastopol was taken over by Prince Gortchakoff, who signalized his arrival by a violent attack on the night of 22nd March, no fewer than 15,000 men being employed against the French lines north-east of the Mamelon and the adjacent British posts. The assault was so sudden that for a time the Zouaves were driven off, when many of the Russians turned about so as to enter the British trenches, but the 77th and 79th regiments, on whom the brunt of the struggle fell, hung on grimly until reinforcements could be brought up, and eventually they threw back the enemy by a bayonet charge. During this fight Major Gordon, R.E., stood on the parapet of the trench, armed only with a switch, with which he encouraged his men while hurling stones (for want

of better material) at the foe; he was wounded twice in the same arm. The individualism of the British soldier was again strikingly shown, after the Russians had momentarily got into a mortar battery. A handful of redcoats dashed into the battery after them, bayonets fixed, and by sheer momentum expelled them on the other side; then they obtained cartridges with which to continue the fight from the dead Russians at their feet. This "little Inkermann" cost the Russians 2000 killed and wounded, and they were compelled to call a truce next day for burying the dead.

On 10th April, Easter Monday, amid torrents of rain, a second great cannonade commenced upon all the works—the Garden Batteries, Barrack Battery, the Redan, Malakoff and Mamelon. Round shot shrieked through the air and went into the earthworks with a hollow "plop"! Shells whistled overhead, then burst in endless succession with ear-splitting detonations. Mortars added their high-flying whistle. Before night fell some 20,000 projectiles of every kind had fallen on the works and the town, and yet the result was disappointingly small. The Russians, too, although taken by surprise, soon replied in a growing crescendo, until the whole plateau, as well as the sombre lines of the works, was lighted by incessant flashes, while long trails of white smoke curled across it. Next day the bombardment was continued with equal fury, and the next, and the one after that; but by the 17th Raglan had come to the conclusion that the besieging batteries were still not strong enough. The works were soft and were easily repaired. There was no practicable breach. Thus the cannonade died down once more, to the intense chagrin of the troops, who thirsted for an assault, regardless of the tremendous risks which the clearer eyes of their leaders discerned.

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Meanwhile, the sap and parallel work had been creeping nearer to the Russian lines; on the other hand, the enemy laid out on the slopes not only galleries, mines and rifle pits, but also fougasses, tiny hidden mines which, when trodden on, exploded and blew the unfortunate victims to bits. Earthworks pierced for guns were also laid across the streets of Sebastopol, a grim warning of the extremities to which the Russians were prepared to go.

On the night of 1st May the French had their first striking success. The whole of the Russian pits in front of the Central Bastion were captured, with 200 prisoners, but at a terrible cost, and a desperate sortie next day failed to retake the position. This success was achieved by General Pélissier, a bold and determined officer who soon afterwards replaced Canrobert in the chief command.

An immense supply of ammunition having been accumulated, a third bombardment began in June. More than 450 large guns and mortars opened at once, the din being terrific; they continued to pound the works throughout the day and night, but although the Russian counter-fire was dominated it could rarely be silenced for long, while the damaged forts were as readily repaired. This moment, however, had been chosen for simultaneous attacks, by the British upon the Quarries under the face of the Redan, and by the French upon the Mamelon. Punctually at 6.30 a.m. on 7th June, Pélissier fired a rocket which sent the troops forward with rousing cheers into the deadly hailstorm.

The Quarries, a partially entrenched position, were usually full of Russian riflemen, but now, by a happy chance, they were empty, and the British, taking possession unopposed, speedily reversed the parapets.

Their possession of the place was not to be long undisputed, however, for the enemy made six successive and most determined efforts to recapture the ground, but without avail. Throughout the next night an incessant crackle of musketry went on; it was punctuated from time to time by the crack of exploding shells, as the British artillery, firing over the heads of their own troops, smote the Russians upon the slopes beneath the Redan. It was at this time that the famous exploit of Corporal Quin took place. He was standing alone in a part of the Quarries when a Russian officer followed by four men rushed down upon him. Quin sprang at them with the utmost boldness, levelled one with the butt end of his musket, bayoneted a second, frightened the other two into flight, and then captured the officer!

Fortunately the Redan had been so badly damaged that its guns could not be depressed so as to bear on the Quarries; for there were only 400 British in the original attack, with 600 more in reserve, and of this small force 380 were killed or wounded. It was believed by those on the spot that at about 3 a.m. the Redan itself might have been captured by a bold attack, some officers even creeping unobserved right up to the embrasures; but nobody gave the order, and in any event not enough troops had been detailed to make the feat practicable.

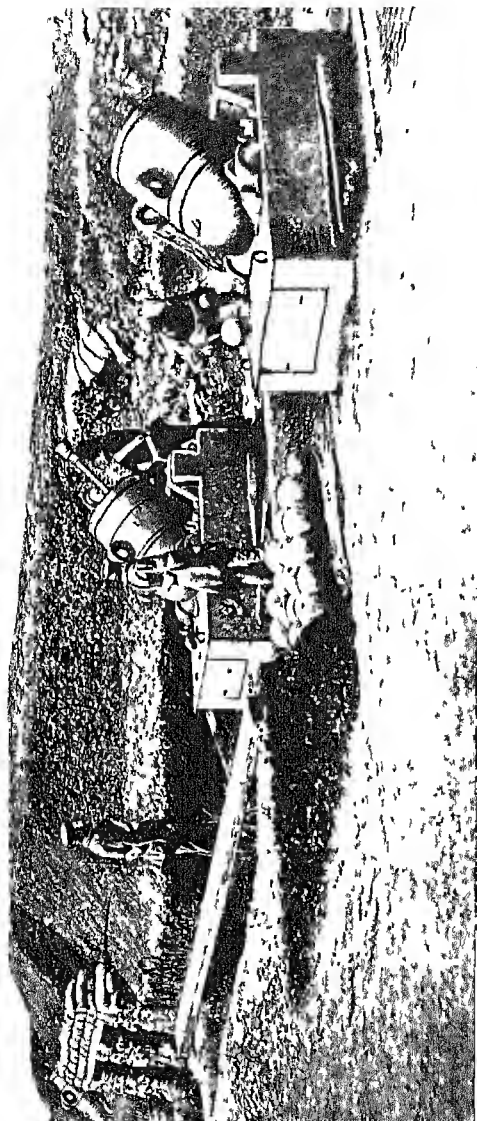
The attack on the Mamelon was as furiously contested as the first had been. The French had the 2nd and 5th Divisions—Zouaves, Algerine Rifles, troops of the Imperial Guard, regiments of the line, and a few Turks. The three leading columns, commanded by General Wimpffen, reached the base of the hill, stormed the forts on its slope, and occupied two advanced trenches, when a tremendous fire

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opened upon them from the Mamelon itself and from the Malakoff and Redan as well. Nevertheless, the red-and-blue figures continued to ascend; the Algerine Rifles captured a battery of four guns, and the Zouaves reached the foot of the fort proper. They had no scaling ladders, but they scrambled up the earthen parapets and through the embrasures, bayoneting the gunners as they stood by their pieces. Instantly the gabions were turned round so as to afford some shelter from the cannon of the Malakoff behind; meanwhile, the tide of battle, only a few yards in front, surged to and fro as the masses of maddened men wrestled on the counterslope, but the downward impetus prevailed, and the Russians turned and ran. The Zouaves had been given strict orders not to follow, but they rushed excitedly down the hill for 400 to 500 yards, right under the Malakoff—a fatal mistake, for they could not maintain themselves and had to retire again under a decimating fire. Despite these vicissitudes, the French hold on the Mamelon never again relaxed.

A third attack this day on the extreme right of the line was equally successful, the French capturing two redoubts and 400 prisoners, at a spot which overlooked the hitherto hidden road from Sebastopol past Inkermann.

A few days later, having planted guns in the captured works, Pélissier began yet another bombardment; it was followed by many simultaneous attacks, most of which met with disaster. The French, provided with scaling ladders, were to attempt the Malakoff and other works towards the main Harbour; the English objective was the Redan and the forts guarding the Inner Harbour. Unfortunately, a column on the extreme right of the French mistook the signal for the assault and, dashing prematurely into the open ground,



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Mortar Batteries in front of Picquet House, Sebastopol
(From a photograph by Roger Fenton in the Victoria and Albert Museum)

was mown down and dispersed, its general being killed. In order to support the attack, the other attacks were also launched prematurely; one after another they too failed, although at one instant the eagles actually stood on the outworks of the Malakoff. The French even got into a group of houses near the foot of the hill, whence they were dislodged only when the Russian reserves swarmed over the buildings, tore off the roofs, and stoned out the occupants. This unsuccessful enterprise cost each side some 6000 casualties; everywhere the Russians were triumphant.

Meanwhile, the British attacks, which had been timed to follow the French, were foredoomed to failure, and it was only out of loyalty to his allies that Raglan allowed them to go forward. The Light Division, Colonel Yea leading, rushed out over the open ground towards the right flank of the Redan, but were smitten hip and thigh by grape and musketry; Yea fell, and the attack had to be called off. A simultaneous attack on the opposite face of the Redan failed just as dismally; a third, which was intended to storm the apex, was wisely suspended altogether. Yet a relatively minor operation by General Eyre on the extreme left produced a brilliant success, which if pushed home promptly might have terminated the siege. During the darkest hours of the night he led about 2000 men down a ravine to a cemetery in the low ground near the Inner Harbour, passing beneath the guns of the great forts above. The defenders, taken by surprise, made little resistance, and Eyre and his men actually held a part of the town for a whole day, picking off the Russians from within their own houses. But night came on again; there was no support; the main works had not been stormed "according to plan", and Eyre, with one man in

four of his little force stricken down, was compelled to relinquish the prize.

Ten days later Lord Raglan died of cholera. He had done his best, but he was an old man, who had fought at Badajoz thirty-two years before, and he no longer possessed the grip, control of detail, or speed that were so badly needed before Sebastopol. He was succeeded by General Simpson.

Everyone realized now that the capture of Sebastopol had become a point of honour, both with the British and with the French; it must be pressed to a finish whatever the cost, and really stupendous efforts were made to achieve success. The troops in the field mustered nearly a quarter of a million men. The whole of July and August were spent in carrying the trenches still closer to the walls, and the French succeeded in establishing a *place d'armes* right in front of the Malakoff. For their part, the Russians did everything possible to hinder these works, and besides an incessant cannonade their raiding parties were always out, while the harbour was alive with the shipping that brought supplies over from the north shore. On 16th August the external army under Liprandi, which had long been hovering around, made a fresh attempt to break into the allied ground; they tried to drive the French and Turks from the Bridge of the Tchernaya, but after a fierce struggle were utterly overwhelmed by the severity of the French fire, and fled.

On 23rd August the French gained a fresh advantage by capturing a rifle pit on the very glacis of the Malakoff; 500 Russians who tried to recapture it were rudely repulsed. Meanwhile, the bombardment continued relentlessly, and signs were not wanting that the Russian morale was now declining; as a pre-

caution against defeat, too, they built a floating raft-bridge across the Harbour and began to take back stores. The crisis was at hand. Nevertheless, their guns still barked defiantly from the grim Malakoff and the straight-lined Redan. The former had now become a terrible work, 400 yards long, with a palisade of sharpened stakes in front. Behind the stakes stood an enormous earthen parapet, bordered by a ditch 20 feet deep and 24 feet wide; next was a high wall, supporting three tiers of heavy guns one above another. In the rear of these defences were rifle pits and a *place d'armes* for the defenders.

On 5th September the final bombardment began at dawn, over a stretch of four miles at once, on a scale and with a continuous fury never seen before. The earthworks were in places blown away, yet still there were no definite breaches. The British trained some of their mortars to bear on the ships, and one vessel caught fire, apparently from an exploding shell, and was burnt to the water's edge. All through the night fierce bursts took place over every part of the works, becoming a continuous line of explosions again at dawn on the 6th, and never ceasing save when the guns had to be cooled. The Russians made super-human efforts to reply in kind; at one time 800 guns of the fortress and 700 of the allies were all belching forth death and destruction at once. During this day more signs were noticed of disorder within Sebastopol and of an impending retreat across the Harbour. Again the weapons spat out spasms of venomous fire at night, the place becoming once more an inferno on the dawn of the 7th. This day another ship was burnt, while flames broke out in the town behind the Redan, and a loud explosion after nightfall announced that a magazine had been hit. So it continued until noon of

the 8th, the enemy never having a moment's intermission, and then the troops, carrying forty-eight hours' provisions, were sent down into the trenches. The hour had struck.

Pélissier had placed 25,000 men in and about the Mamelon, crowding every trench as closely as the troops could stand. Their objectives were the Malakoff and the Little Redan. The Redan itself fell to the British, of whom the 2nd and Light Divisions, under Codrington, formed the assault parties. Pélissier himself took post within the Mamelon, so as to be within reach of all and to signal to the British the exact moment when to make their effort. The closest parallel now stood only 20 yards away from the outworks of the Malakoff, but that 20 yards was covered by every gun in the place, though the defences had been battered and shaken by the extraordinary intensity of the bombardment.

Precisely at noon the bombardment ceased. With a rush the works were scaled, and the French then struggled up the slope to the old Malakoff Tower; a struggle maintained with guns, rifles, pistols, axes, bayonets. The Russians were overwhelmed; within five minutes the tricolour floated from the tower, and the engineers set to work immediately to turn the parapets and alter the emplacements.

The commencement of the attack on the Little Redan was equally brilliant, but the terrible cross-fire from the other forts compelled the French to withdraw again, and despite every effort and enormous losses they were unable to make any headway. Nor were they permitted to retain the Malakoff unchallenged, for the French standards, flying from the parapet, were the centre of an heroic struggle during many hours, and the interior of the fort became a

veritable shambles, but powerful reserves of Zouaves and line regiments were constantly fed to the place, and in the end the enemy had to admit its loss.

The British attack, though equally important, was carried out on a petty scale that seems almost incomprehensible. Only the apex of the Redan was to be attempted, because there it was hoped that the Russians could bring very little direct fire to bear. Five hundred of the Light Division led the assault, followed by 500 of the 2nd Division; they were preceded by a covering part of 200 riflemen and by 320 men carrying ladders. As soon as the French colours floated above the Malakoff Tower—the agreed signal—out rushed the British, eager for action, and while the riflemen spread over the ground, the ladder party placed their ladders, descended into the ditch, carried half the ladders to the far side, and were then out of reach of the terrible gunfire from above.

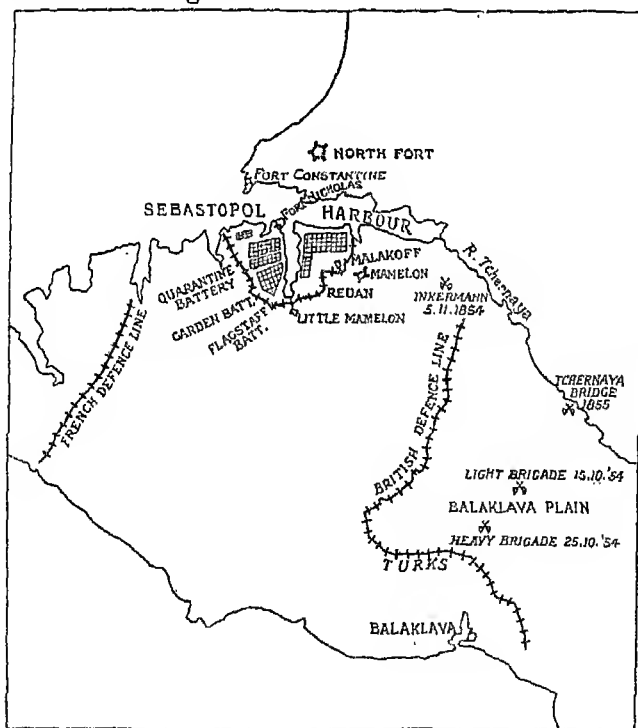
The officers tossed coins for the honour of leading the assault, and Colonel Unett won. As soon as they appeared in the open the guns began to mow them down; Unett himself was killed and many others wounded; yet the survivors, despite the great distance, still rushed on until they were beneath the angle of depression of the cannon and only exposed to rifle fire. Forcing gaps through the abattis they ran on to the salient angle of the ditch. The ladders were too short; but somehow the gallant fellows managed to scramble down, most inadequate in number and miserably ill supported by their higher command. They clambered up to the parapet and saw through the embrasures masses of Russian infantry and many guns, but could not get in. Meantime, however, the 2nd Division had actually forced an entrance a little way north of the salient. Their leader, Colonel Wind-

ham, was among the first to enter, and though he and others stayed there, doing all that was possible with their handful of troops, the deplorable lack of supports rendered all this bravery worthless. The Russians were too solid, too numerous, to be dislodged; they were too constantly reinforced from behind, and it became for the British a matter of retiring or being shot down one by one where they stood. During this crisis Colonel Windham displayed almost incredible coolness and activity, hastening from point to point to collect his men and maintain some sort of order. Message after message was sent to Codrington for supports, but the messengers were shot down, and the supporting parties arrived in such dribblets and confusion as to render any concerted effort hopeless. Windham then made a last desperate bid for victory by himself going back for reinforcements; but while arguing with the general, he saw the survivors of his gallant band leaping out through the gaps in the Redan, which was thus lost again. Thus in two hours 30,000 British soldiers had been baulked of victory, and had lost 2447 killed and wounded, through the lack of foresight (not to put it more strongly) of those in command of them.

Fortunately, however, the great attack on the Malakoff had decided the fate of Sebastopol. It had cost the French more than 7500 casualties, but the Russian losses were even heavier, and moreover, their morale had—temporarily, at least—been broken. That night explosion after explosion told its own tale. With one tremendous roar a huge mass of ground behind the Redan flared up; no sooner had the fragments struck the ground than other bursts announced the destruction of the Flagstaff and Garden Batteries. The town was hidden by flames and smoke. The few ships

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that remained afloat were scuttled. The troops withdrew across their floating bridge to the north shore, and then destroyed the communication. By morning, when the allies prepared to push home their advantage to the uttermost, they had nothing to do but walk into the ruins of Sebastopol; while their foes, securely posted in an impregnable position across the water, watched with a smile of derision this end to all the labour, suffering, death and destruction of a forty-nine-weeks' siege.



CHAPTER IX

The Siege of Lucknow

Less than two years after the fall of Sebastopol Englishmen everywhere became painfully interested in a number of very different sieges, wherein their own unhappy countrymen, who rarely totalled more than a few hundreds, were assailed by hordes of trained Indian troops; the inevitable result being massacre if the natives won, or courts-martial and blowing from the cannon's mouth if the whites prevailed. For the Indian Mutiny was no ordinary war, but a terrible struggle to the death, to avoid extermination at the hands of a mutinous army on the one side, and to evade the consequences of revolt, arson, murder, rape, on the other.

Though undetected by the sahibs of Calcutta, and even by the officers of the regiments themselves, the mutiny had long been brewing; this is proven by a whole series of insubordinate and mutely hostile acts spread over a period of years. The vast extent of India, and the trifling number of Europeans who were resident there, left the power to enforce the law in the hands of a large native army, whose lower-grade officers were themselves natives; above these was a hierarchy of the British military caste, with a meagre sprinkling of troops of the line. The native soldiers had for years been misunderstood and misused, not wilfully so much as through the arrogance which is only too common when a white race rules a coloured

one, coupled with too much indifference to the native religious prejudices. Many springs may combine into an overwhelming torrent, and when to the innumerable trickles of discontent from small causes (which themselves followed the Sepoy War of thirteen years previously) there was added the incident of the greased cartridges, trouble ahead became obvious. In the spring of 1857 a new type of cartridge was issued, the wrapping of which, it was alleged, had been greased with cows' fat, and as the cow is sacred in Hindu eyes, the use of the new cartridges involved a loss of caste in this world and perdition in the next. At about the same time Christian missionaries happened to be more than usually active. It was in vain that the obnoxious order was explained away in some camps and rescinded in others. The men would not use the cartridges. They believed that a plot was afoot to make them lose caste and then convert them to Christianity. Agitators, too, playing upon their fears, insinuated the thought that at last the hour of the hated Feringhees had struck; now was the time to rid Hindustan of their domination for ever! To what extent these political motives were supported by some of the less wise and more ambitious native princes will never be known; but a number of them were almost certainly implicated deeply.

On 10th May actual mutiny, with bloodshed and burnings, broke out at Meerut, near Delhi, and one of the largest camps in the Peninsula. Fire and murder spread with the rapidity of lightning throughout the adjacent districts, eventually covering most of the Upper Ganges region; the inert mass of the populace mostly remained quiet, but the native police generally sided with the mutineers. Officers were shot down on parade-grounds; settlers and the Company's agents

often also with their wives and children, were barbarously murdered; the few small British units were isolated, and for some time compelled to act on the defensive, and even those regiments which remained nominally loyal were tainted, only awaiting the right time to strike. The most powerful of the native princes, the Mogul, was an elderly dotard who was induced to support the mutineers in the hope that thereby he might regain the power once wielded by his ancestors, and Delhi, his capital, became a focus for rebellious bands of every kind, who varied the pleasant amusement of torturing or terrorizing the Feringhees with quarrels among themselves for precedence and power.

Meanwhile Oudh, of which Lucknow was the chief city, had not participated to any great extent in these excesses; for the Chief Commissioner, Sir Henry Lawrence, although a lifelong supporter of just Hindu claims, was no friend to violence or murder, and his strong personality kept Lucknow almost free from disturbance for more than a month after the mutiny was raging elsewhere. He was, however, quite surrounded by roving bands of the enemy; while at Cawnpore, a large city on the Ganges, only forty miles away, the Nana Sahib had raised the standard of revolt, and was deeply engaged in the course which has led all decent men to pronounce his name with horror. To frighten the natives, mutineers were hanged on a hill near the city of Lucknow, and after a partial revolt of a single regiment the ringleaders were blown to pieces from the mouths of the guns, but the English, who numbered only a thousand all told, could be certain of themselves alone. They lived on top of an active volcano, which at any moment might erupt, and all Lawrence's prudence and restraint were needed to prevent the outbreak for as long as he did.

Lucknow, a city twice the size of Brighton, occupies the angle between the broad river Gumti and a winding canal; parts are hilly, and on one of the most conspicuous bluffs, situated at the apex of the angle, stood the Residency, a three-storied building with an ornamental white tower at one corner. The other hills of Lucknow were mostly crowned by native palaces or Moslem mosques; but one, the Machi Bhawan, had long ago been a fort and now held within its ruinous works a large English powder-magazine; for effect, too, Lawrence had had mounted there a number of ancient cannon, which pointed to the city; the ramparts were mounted by a guard of the 32nd British regiment of the line, under Colonel Palmer. The whole muster of British soldiers in Lucknow was about 1000; there were, besides, two native regiments of foot, both under suspicion, and some irregular native cavalry, stationed in cantonments at Mariaon, several miles away. Rumours had been spread daily for a month that these troops would mutiny; but though the city was seething with unrest everything seemed quiet. Suddenly, however, a crisis supervened, which eventually brought on the siege of Lucknow.

On the night of 30th May, Lawrence, who had been told, as usual, that an outbreak was timed to occur that evening at nine o'clock precisely, remarked jocularly, when the hour arrived, "Your friends are late!" Immediately afterwards, however, the sound of firing from the cantonments proved the prophecy to be true. The Commissioner and his officers, mounting their horses, rode to the scene of the disturbance; they took a half-battery with them, also 200 of the 32nd, with some native cavalry. The mutineers did not stand to fight, but ran away after the first discharge; but they had already destroyed most of the

buildings in the cantonments and had murdered several officers and wounded two or three more. At first only the 71st regiment seemed affected; then the 48th went after them, and it was noticed that the pursuing cavalry showed a lukewarmness which augured ill for their future conduct; they also deserted soon afterwards. Lawrence, forced to abandon the pursuit, returned to Lucknow, where he succeeded throughout the month of June in avoiding any very active hostilities, although almost the whole of Oudh beyond the city was in a turmoil.

It was obvious, however, that unless the British achieved some immediate success, such as the capture of Delhi, which would re-establish their prestige, Lucknow itself must become involved in the struggle; and upon Lawrence's shoulders hung the burden of providing for 522 white women and children, with little more than 1000 European men all told, 150 of whom were civilians; outside the city the mutineers numbered tens of thousands, and they had besides the covert assistance of every ill-minded civilian in that teeming population. Efforts were therefore directed to making defensible a small area in and around the Residency, with a periphery of about a mile. It took in several houses, the gardens of which already possessed walls and these were strengthened, besides being connected by walls, cactus hedges, ditches and palisades. Thirty guns were disposed in batteries overlooking the streets of the town, the bridges across the river and canal, and other points. The church was converted into a storhouse. Cattle were brought into the enclosure, besides grain and ammunition in great quantity; but there was so much to do and so little labour available, that the storm burst before the place had become anything like a real fortress. It was also

hoped—until wiser counsels prevailed—that by retaining the old fort at Machi Bhawan, where a quarter of the entire force remained, they would stand a better chance, but even Lawrence believed that the place could not hold out more than a fortnight, hence his anxiety to avoid a collision. His officers, however, and especially the active and pugnacious civilian, Martin Gubbins, were thirsting for vengeance, and eventually they induced him at dawn on 30th June to lead forth his diminutive and partly tainted army against a large rebel body which had been reported in the vicinity.

The little force, only 700 all told, with a few guns, crossed the bridge over the Kokral Canal and went some distance without finding the enemy. The sepoy, however, were hiding behind the thick timber which bordered the road, and at a favourable moment they ambushed the army with vastly superior numbers. In the heat of the action Lawrence's native gunners went over to the enemy, throwing their pieces into the ditch; the British, who were tired, hungry and disheartened, obeyed only too readily the order to retreat and the entire cavalry remaining to deal with the pursuing rebels numbered only forty sabres. Lawrence rode back with the wreck of his army, and was heard to mutter in his agony, "My God, my God, *I brought them to this!*" Meanwhile, the enemy had cut off their retreat, and now clustered strongly around the Kokral bridge; but the handful of cavalry, by a gallant charge, dispersed them without a blow, the mutineers not waiting to face the shock.

The beaten force then struggled back into the Residency, along with a rush of fugitives, none knowing what to do or where to go; but fortunately both bridges were still held, and this gave time for some

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reorganization before the enemy could get across the canal. By sunset, however, the Feringhees were besieged; shells began to drop into the Residency itself, and in the city the glare of fires announced that the work of looting and destruction had commenced. At this crisis it was decided to abandon the Machi Bhawan and bring all the troops into the Residency, for even the walls of the impromptu fortress were not yet completed. Palmer, picking up heliograph signals from the roof of the Residency, slipped out with his men in the darkness and safely covered the half-mile to the Residency without interference. A moment later a terrific explosion announced that the powder magazine at the Machi Bhawan had been duly blown up; an important matter, this, for the rebels were afterwards reduced at times to firing logs of wood from their cannon, ammunition being so scarce.

The siege was only two days old when the defenders lost their leader. On 1st July a shell exploded in the room where Lawrence was working, but without injuring him. He decided to stay there in the whimsical belief that the same place would not be struck a second time; but the very next evening, while he was lying down there resting another shell tore through the wall and burst. Captain Wilson, who was with him, was knocked down and bruised. On rising from among the dust he exclaimed, "Sir Henry, are you all right?" There was no reply, but at the third call Lawrence answered faintly, "I am killed." He had been mortally injured in the groin, and although he lingered in great pain until the morning of the 4th, there was no hope for him. Before he died, this brave man, one of the noblest characters in the Company's service, made over the command to Brigadier Inglis, with the repeated injunction never to surrender to

their treacherous and ferocious foes. He ordered his tomb to bear the words, "Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty. May the Lord have mercy on his soul!" and when he was buried, amid the crackle of musketry and the booming of guns, there was not a soul in the little garrison but keenly felt his loss.

Inglis, in whom sound common-sense and a quiet courage were equally noticeable, now took over the heavy burden. The defences were completed and strengthened; a tiny reserve of men was created to meet emergencies, and everything that could be thought of was done to provide for contingencies and to animate the little garrison. Each household became a fort in itself. A mining party was created under Captain Fulton, of the Royal Engineers, to deal with the ever-present danger from the enemy's subterranean approaches. Inglis himself was everywhere, seeking to inspire confidence, to soothe grumbles and to console the wounded. But it was hard work. Officers and men had to take turn and turn alike; and when their day's duty on the walls was over, they had to spend much of the night in burying the dead, in repairing the damaged works, and in performing the thousand and one jobs which a lack of servant labour necessitated. Meanwhile, the women, who had found consolation in prayer, steeled themselves to the duties of the hospital and the danger from flying bullets. It was indeed an heroic band.

Fortunately the rebels were ill led. The noisiest agitators, who had gained the upper hand in their camp, insisted on placing their guns (which often pointed at the works point-blank from a couple of hundred yards) wherever their caprice determined; and sometimes their shells passed right over the Resi-

dency and landed in their own lines on the other side. They never succeeded in making a breach; but they were cunning enough to dig gun pits, in which their men took refuge from the English fire. Their sharpshooters, standing behind the loopholed walls of the ruined houses, or firing at longer range from the mosques or roofs, were more formidable; and the garrison had daily to bemoan the loss of a dozen men or more from this cause alone.

On 20th July it became obvious that an assault would be attempted, particularly against the principal battery, which was known as the Redan. Every available man mounted the walls, even the wounded leaning there, grimly determined to sell their lives at the highest price. At 10 o'clock a mine exploded in front of the Redan, having fortunately not been carried far enough forward. Immediately afterwards the enemy opened on this work a fire of cannon-balls and musketry, the prelude to a most determined assault. Led by an officer with a sword in one hand and the green flag of Mahomet in the other, the sepoy dragged up ladders, descended the ditch and came up against the breastwork before the guns; the leader waving them on with the cry, "Forward, my braves!" He was shot down, but for some time his followers attempted to force a way in, even grasping the muskets of the defenders, and vainly trying to get a foothold in the work. At last they gave way; then came another attempt, and another, for four whole hours, until in the end, with the ground littered with their dead and wounded, they desisted, resuming their angry cannonade. In this affair the garrison had only four killed and twelve wounded; the losses of the besiegers were to be counted by hundreds. Moreover, the defence was greatly heartened by this, its first

general assault, whereas the inherent inferiority complex of the native infantry was only strengthened; never again did they attack with the same determination.

On the following day the garrison suffered an important loss. Major Banks, while rashly bending over a wall to observe the enemy, was shot through the head and killed. The same night a messenger brought them their first news of the outer world. They were not forgotten. General Havelock, who had been sent from Calcutta to relieve Cawnpore and Lucknow, had now entered the former town after repeatedly defeating the enemy in battle, and he hoped to reach Lucknow in less than a week. Alas, little did either Havelock or the defenders know what difficulties and dangers had yet to be overcome.

Meanwhile, the enemy began again to bombard the Residency from every angle, and it is incredible that so little harm should have been done by so incessant a shower of missiles. There remained not a single house in the enclosure without its bullet marks or shell scars, it is true; nevertheless, the casualties were far fewer than might have been expected. But the greatest danger came from mining, in which the rebels displayed great skill and audacity. Repeatedly they drove tunnels towards or under the works, but just as often the garrison miners intercepted them, blew in their walls and killed the workmen. Fulton himself was continually on the alert for the sound of pickaxe or crowbar; he would even descend into the shaft alone, with lantern and pistol, and, waiting patiently till the enemy's tunnel had reached him, would then shoot the foremost workman dead and scare the rest into flight.

So the days wore on till 10th August, with no further news from without. The little band, worn

out by incessant labour, living in an atmosphere of foul stench, tormented by myriads of flies and an ever-blazing sun, wrangling with one another and often insubordinate, yet clung, every one of them, to the defiant cry, "No surrender". The flag, torn by shot and bullets, still waved proudly above the Residency. Every Sunday church services were held; every day prayers brought consolation, if not repose of mind.

On 10th August an undetected mine nearly brought about a disaster. It had been carried right under the wall on the southern side, and it blew up a house and tore open a breach ten feet wide. Upon seeing their success, the enemy attempted an assault, but the little reserve was brought up, the gap was partially closed, and after a long struggle the rebels were driven out again.

Eight days later another mine in the same quarter blew up an outhouse, and with it went two officers and two sentries; all four fell unhurt into the square, but the ruins of the house buried eleven men—a very serious loss where not a soul could be spared. As the smoke cleared away, another attack was attempted, but the enemy, who were massed beyond the breach, were intimidated when their leaders fell, nor would they face the same fate from the deadly marksmen within. A band at a different point, however, actually gained possession of an outhouse within the enclosure and began to loophole the walls; but now Inglis opened upon them with a howitzer, drove them out again, and with packing-cases, planks, doors, anything which came first to hand, had the breach made good. Before night, too, a sally was attempted here, some inconveniently close houses were seized, and the whole blown up with barrels of gunpowder. This success was speedily followed by another. A short distance

out stood Johannes' House, the upper story of which had been overlooked when destroying the buildings before the siege; it had become a snipers' nest, and now was the chance to destroy it. Fulton ordered Lieut. Innes to run a mine under it. The men worked unremittingly—for sixty-four hours Innes never slept; by the morning of the 21st the mine was ready. Presently there came a shock, the house bulged, and then fell like a pack of cards, carrying the snipers with it. In the midst of the confusion two parties of British sallied forth to right and left of the smoking ruin, and blew the adjacent houses into fragments as well.

The enemy now varied his tactics. He pretended to be preparing new attacks, which never matured; yet the garrison, who had to be incessantly alert, were compelled each time to man the walls, their nerves were frayed, and they were robbed of whatever rest had hitherto been possible, and still there was no news of the relief column. It seemed indeed as if they had been abandoned to their fate. On 5th September a real assault was attempted—the fourth and last, but it was easily beaten off, and thereafter both sides lay passively waiting for the end.

The siege had now lasted almost ten weeks, and it seemed impossible that flesh and blood could stand the strain much longer. There remained only twenty-four gunners to man the thirty guns, so that during the alarms the men had to run from gun to gun before a battery could be worked. On 29th August Havelock's messenger, Ungud, had again slipped through the lines, but with the disappointing report that after twice advancing from Cawnpore and twice defeating the rebels in a pitched battle, Havelock had considered his force to be too feeble to attempt the few remaining miles to Lucknow. He was calling for rein-

forcements and could not hope to reach the city until the 23rd or 24th of September. When the prospect of another month's agony became known to those who had endured so much already, many of the natives deserted. Inglis was worn out; for three and a half months he had not taken off his clothes to sleep. Small-pox and cholera were both extending their dreadful ravages amongst the garrison; the plight of the poor wounded was awful; the stench from the rotting corpses of unburied animals, the insanitary condition of the camp, and above all, the plague of flies, were well-nigh unendurable. Under a mistaken impression that the grain supply had run low, Inglis had ordered rations to be reduced. Yet when the survivors of that gallant band saw their thin, sick, but uncomplaining womenfolk, the infants who toddled on the ground, the tortured wounded in the hospital, but one thought ran through every mind in the Residency: "No surrender!" If they must die they would die like Englishmen. A last urgent appeal was sent back to Havelock to hurry, and then, not knowing whether or not the messenger would get through, they went back to the walls and waited.

Henry Havelock was an old soldier, with side-whiskers and bristling moustache, who might well have served Thackeray for a sketch of Colonel Newcome. His piercing eyes alone redeemed him from the commonplace. He was a master of strategy, who understood his art better than any man in India; but he had been denied the opportunity of using his knowledge till now, when he had been forty-one years a soldier. Nevertheless, when this, his first independent command, was offered him, he accepted without demur the herculean task of taking a mere handful of men to the relief of Cawnpore and Lucknow, through entire

provinces which swarmed with bands of sepoy and a hostile populace.

On 30th June, at Allahabad, he collected 1000 British troops, drawn from the 64th, 78th and 84th Highlanders and the 1st Madras Fusiliers, with 130 Sikhs. His cavalry comprised twenty volunteers, most of whom had been ruined by the mutiny, and his six guns were manned by invalid artillerymen and raw recruits. With this contemptible little army Havelock set out for Cawnpore. At Fatehpur he beat a rebel army and captured all their guns, without the loss of a single British soldier. Shortly afterwards, on 15th July, he thrashed the rebels twice in a single day, but although the British were so exhausted that they slept on the field of action, Havelock heard that the Nana Sahib held prisoner in Cawnpore more than 200 English women and children, and upon being told this, before daybreak his men were ready to march again.

It was intensely hot, and many fell out by the roadside; yet, magnetized by their leader's fierce determination, they dragged themselves along until stopped by the Nana Sahib himself, at the head of 50,000 men. They were encamped in a well-chosen crescent formation before Cawnpore, the centre and horns being protected by fortified villages. Havelock, who was a master of the art of outflanking, turned the enemy's left and after a severe fight completely routed this great army; nothing but his deplorable weakness in cavalry prevented the victory from being decisive. The Nana fled, but before he did so he gave orders to massacre the 200 remaining captives. They were all women and children, and had been confined in a room at the palace. They were now ruthlessly shot and slashed to pieces with swords, the severed limbs and

mangled bodies, even with some who were not yet dead, being thrust down a well; there the ghastly remains were found by the indignant Highlanders on the 17th. Many who saw these things solemnly vowed vengeance and broke into reprisals upon all Indians; Havelock had great difficulty to keep them in hand.

He was now compelled to divide his little force, 300 men under Ncill being left at Cawnpore. Havelock himself with the remainder, supported by a small reinforcement which had arrived almost providentially, crossed the Ganges to the Lucknow side; the river was five times as wide as the Thames at Westminster and flowing like a torrent, but the rebels made no opposition and the passage was safely accomplished in eight hours. A river, a canal and several fortified towns and villages now lay between the troops and Lucknow; that town itself contained the flower of the rebel army, while other large forces were hovering about Cawnpore. To oppose these the general had but 1500 men all told; but the need of an advance was urgent and the glory of his four victories had preceded him. He gave the order to advance. On 29th July they encountered a large force of sepoys, occupying a fortified enclosure in front of the town of Unao. It was protected by a swamp on one side and by flooded meadows on the other; the houses of Unao itself had been loopholed. Nevertheless, the position was carried and the place set on fire. Later in the day 6000 rebels hurried up to aid their already beaten comrades; Havelock caught them in a trap and mercilessly shot them down. During the pursuit his tired but victorious troops reached a walled position at Bashiratganj; he attacked at once, and with the same success as before. Thus for the second time in his all too brief career Havelock had won two victories in a single day.

Now, however, his effective infantry numbered only 850, the rest being mostly sick or wounded. The Nana's troops, who seemed countless, still hovered about his rear; ahead lay unknown dangers, culminating in the disciplined army which held Lucknow and surrounded the Residency. His ammunition was failing, while the wounded were a clog on his movements, nor could they be left behind under a guard. Although he realized perfectly how much prestige he must lose, Havelock now displayed his true greatness by ordering a retreat. Despite the murmurs of his officers he marched the little army back to Mangalwar, and then asked Calcutta to send him another 1000 men and a battery of guns. The Governor-General, who was inundated from all quarters with requests for troops that he did not possess, replied that no help could be sent for another two months; so in view of Lucknow's plight, and against his better judgment, Havelock set out again, once more reached Bashiratganj, and once more defeated the enemy there (5th August); they fled so fast that, owing to his lack of cavalry, he could not follow them. There was nothing for it but to retreat again, "the most painful resolution I have ever formed," he wrote, yet undoubtedly one of the wisest. The troops, bitterly discontented, were marched back anew to Mangalwar, only to find fresh dangers confronting them. Neill at Cawnpore was being attacked by 4000 rebels; meanwhile, the beaten mob in Oudh had reassembled at Bashiratganj. Havelock dashed back, defeated the one, and then countermarched to Cawnpore in time to help the other. It was now 13th August; but although men and officers alike were worn out by this incessant marching and fighting, Havelock led them out again only three days afterwards, and in a brilliant battle defeated the redoubtable chieftain Tantia Topi.

His reward for these invaluable services was only too characteristic. He had won nine pitched battles in a month, had re-established British prestige in an area equal to England, and had worked throughout with raw recruits in the height of an Indian summer. But he had not relieved Lucknow; so he was superseded. Havelock did not complain; but his successor, Sir James Outram, a brilliant cavalry officer, was not the type of man to take advantage of another's victories. On the night of 15th September he entered Cawnpore with a small army and at once announced that to Havelock was due the entire credit for what had hitherto been achieved. The order continued, "The Major-General, therefore, in gratitude for and admiration of the brilliant deeds in arms achieved by General Havelock and his gallant troops, will cheerfully waive his rank on the occasion; and will accompany the force to Lucknow in his civil capacity as Chief Commissioner of Oudh, tendering his military services to General Havelock as a volunteer." Thus was the government properly snubbed by its own servant.

The combined force now totalled 3179 men, including two batteries of artillery, a few irregular native cavalry, the 5th Fusiliers and the 90th Light Infantry. On 21st September the famous march began. The enemy had established themselves in a strong position at Mangalwar, but by Havelock's favourite turning tactics it was carried with little loss; Outram, leading the cavalry in person, captured two guns, while his men sabred 120 of the fugitives. The army bivouacked at Bashiratganj, and then resumed the march in heavy rain.

At six in the morning they were within a day's march of Lucknow, but the rebels, advised of their coming, had ceased operations before the Residency,

and now occupied a strong line of battle across the road at the Alambagh, their centre and right behind a chain of hillocks. The rainy season had now come on, and the whole country was flooded on both sides. Nevertheless, Havelock succeeded in turning the enemy's right flank, the 2nd Brigade marching knee deep through the floods while the artillery diverted the rebels' attention; by this manœuvre the right flank and the centre had already fled before the 5th Fusiliers stormed and captured the Alambagh by a direct assault. Then Outram dashed forward at the head of his cavalry, like hounds unleashed, captured five guns, and drove the fugitives pell-mell towards the canal. But now fresh guns were brought down from the city; they commanded the bridge, and night was falling. The British were therefore withdrawn to the Alambagh again, where they rested as best they could, ankle deep in mud, with rain pouring over their greatcoats, and the roll of thunder growling over the dismal scene. They had light hearts, however, having just learnt of the fall of Delhi; few realized how many would be dead or maimed by the same hour on the morrow.

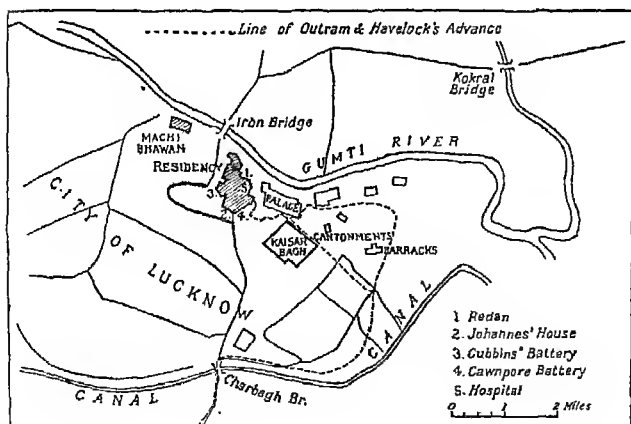
The direct road to the Residency led across the canal by the Charbagh Bridge, past loopholed houses and across trenches which the enemy had dug at intervals from side to side. Havelock wished to save life by turning the position, as he had successfully turned so many others; but Outram thought a turning movement impracticable, and as he was the senior officer Havelock felt compelled to give way. A direct advance on the canal was ordered for the morning of the 25th, at 8 a.m. Meanwhile, the messenger Ungud had been sent on to carry the welcome news to the garrison of relief within a few hours.

After prayers the march was resumed, Outram

leading the way. The country on either side of the road was covered with high grass; here hundreds of the enemy had concealed themselves, but their scattered bullets, even when aided by the artillery which commanded the road on both sides, could not stop the column for more than a brief space. The bridge afforded a sterner obstacle. Hosts of sharpshooters had loopholed the walls of the adjacent houses; it was also defended by five guns that had been drawn up behind a breastwork on the Lucknow side. The road in front was so narrow that only two guns could be deployed to reply. Outram on one side, and the Madras Fusiliers on the other, tried to overwhelm the defence by a flank fire, but they made very little impression, and meanwhile men were falling fast among the British. The position appeared so strong that Neill, who was in charge opposite the bridge, would not take the responsibility of ordering a rush upon it; but young Havelock, the general's son, took the bit between his teeth and himself led the Fusiliers straight down to the guns. On they dashed, crossed the bridge, sprang over the breastwork, bayoneted the gunners, tipped the guns into the river, and so got a footing in Lucknow.

But the enemy was by no means disposed of. As the long column wound its way across and deployed on the Lucknow side, crowds of rebels came down from the town and for three hours maintained a desperate fight in the outskirts. The hour grew late, but it was decided to press on at all costs; a heroic decision, because the flat-roofed houses of the town were crowded with riflemen, and there ensued a bloody and long-contested struggle to pass through the streets. Although saluted by bullets and missiles of every kind as they worked their way forwards, the

Highlanders could not be held, nor did they pause till the very gate of the Residency came in sight; men were falling at every step, while the loss among the officers was exceedingly high, but they were determined that Lucknow should not share the fate of Cawnpore. The gate opened to receive them. The tattered flag of England still fluttered above the Residency; and as Havelock and Outram marched in at the head of the column, Inglis and his gallant band were there waiting to receive them. They burst into deafening cheers at the sight; then ran forward, catching up the bairns and the women as if they had been their own; many burst into tears from sheer joy at this great deliverance. The garrison took up the shout, and from every pit and trench and battery, and from behind the roofless and shattered houses, there rang a cheer of triumph that echoed round the world. Lucknow had been relieved at last!



CHAPTER X

The Siege of Mafeking

Between the Indian Mutiny and the close of the nineteenth century numerous important sieges occurred which we are compelled to pass by for want of space. There was, for instance, the remarkable siege of Paris by the Germans after the French disasters of 1870, during which a million people were starved into surrender. Then there was the heroic defence of Plevna by Osman Pasha, in 1878, against the overwhelming might of Russia, not to mention the still more heroic defence of Khartoum by Chinese Gordon, in 1884. But at the very close of the century two sieges took place in quick succession, at which we must take a glance. Englishmen were engaged in both of them. One was the celebrated defence of the Foreign Legations at Peking, during the Boxer rising of 1900; the other, earlier by a few months, was the siege of Mafeking, in which comedy often relieved the grimmer side of war.

In 1899 Britain was at war with the Boers, a sturdy nation of Dutch settlers on the veldt, whose steadfast resistance to imperial expansion in South Africa had already provoked bloodshed during the previous twenty years, and they had been inspired to resist now because in all her relations with them during those twenty years—political, military, administrative—the island power had emerged with less than credit, and not infrequently with disgrace. Thus, when

matters came to a head, in October, 1899, and the whole fighting force of the Boers—who were not regular soldiers, be it understood, but simply farmers possessing a strong strain of independence, an exceedingly good eye for a mark at 900 yards, a belt of cartridges, and an undying hatred and suspicion of English aggression—when these people streamed over the Transvaal border into Cape Colony and Natal, they suffered from a sense of superiority which the events of the first few months only strengthened. For no war in which Britain had been engaged ever went so badly at the outset. Her columns, as brave as ever, but contemptuously regardless of their opponents' marksmanship and even of the elementary principles of tactics, were trapped time and time again, in rough country where the Boers, securely posted within some rocky kopje, or behind the boulders in a gorge, could bring down the khaki-clad figures at half a mile with scarcely any loss to themselves. Sir George White, operating in Natal, was defeated at Nicholson's Nek, and rather than abandon the important town of Ladysmith, where stores lay worth more than a million pounds, he allowed himself to be shut up there and besieged by a much smaller force than his own. The directors of the De Beers diamond mines at Kimberley, including the ex-premier of Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes, likewise had to face an irruption of the Boers; they were cut off, and 50,000 miners, black and white, with a handful of trained troops, were besieged in the town for several months. Nearly 200 miles north of Kimberley, and almost on the border between British territory and the Transvaal, stood Mafeking, a small railway town, not important in itself, but very important in its associations. It was particularly obnoxious to the Boers, because from Mafeking English aggres-

sion had repeatedly manifested itself; moreover, it had become the administrative centre of a large native district. Mafeking, therefore, was also attacked along with Kimberley and Ladysmith, and the history of the South African war is largely the story of efforts made to free these three towns. Ladysmith was by far the most important, Mafeking's siege by far the most interesting. Immediately after the outbreak of war Boer commandos numbering some 10,000 men, under Delarey, Snyman and Hans Botha, and commanded by the Republic's best general, Piet Cronje, swooped down on Mafeking. They anticipated some resistance, because the peculiar talents of Baden-Powell were already well known; but they thought that the "meercat", as they named him, might be run to earth there, and they expected by sheer weight of numbers to frighten away or overwhelm the British. This proved doubly disastrous, because Baden-Powell refused to be frightened, while the large army engaged before Mafeking—a place of no importance in itself—was necessarily restrained from assisting the Boers farther south at the very time when its aid would have been most welcome. Herein lies the true value of the long and heroic resistance of the defence at Mafeking.

Baden-Powell, at that time Colonel of the 5th Dragoons, was forty-two years old. He had already displayed his remarkable qualities of scoutcraft, which have since given rise to the finest international boys' movement in history. When the impending war became manifest he was sent to Mafeking to organize its defences; he took with him a small staff of picked officers, but his other resources were of the slenderest, comprising less than 800 irregular troops, one-fourth of whom were mounted police. The townspeople, who numbered 400, were also enrolled, being armed

with Lee-Metfords and Martini-Henrys. Thanks to the composition of this scratch army, its members were not tied down by regulations or red tape, and in the circumstances it was probably more efficient than trained troops would have been. A public-spirited merchant named Weil rushed large quantities of supplies into the town; a good stock of live cattle was also herded within the lines. The artillery, so-called, under Major Panzera, comprised only four muzzle-loading 7-pounders, and seven Maxim-guns; there was also an armoured train, which Baden-Powell, anticipating the experience of the Great War, camouflaged with paint and branches of trees. Outside the town, but well within the periphery defended, stood a native village of 6000 souls; 400 of these people were selected to serve as cattle guards, watchmen and scouts, being armed with elephant guns and old-fashioned Snyder rifles.

Baden-Powell saw from the start that if Mafeking, which was totally unprotected, were not to be overwhelmed by the Boer artillery the area enclosed must be as large as possible. He therefore had a line entrenched which measured seven miles in circumference; of course it was totally impossible to hold this with only 1200 men, so the troops were concentrated in small forts at suitable points. Every point was connected with a control tower in the town (where the commandant himself took post) by an ingenious telephone system; thus, immediately his outposts reported an impending attack, from whatever quarter, the Colonel could transport a force thither at least as soon as the Boers could assemble to attack it. Moreover, the surrounding country was a perfectly open and almost barren plain, so that no concealment was possible, except by night, when the British outposts

were scattered over the country beyond the lines. From the very outset, too, every effort was made to deceive the enemy as to the real numbers of the besieged; they believed the British to be far more numerous than was really the case, and this admirable pretence was kept up successfully to the end.

On October 13th the Boers cut off Mafeking from the south; next day they also intercepted the line to the north. Baden-Powell, who believed that offence was the best defence, at once sent out the armoured train to annoy them. He also tried to get rid of two truck-loads of dynamite, which it was intended to destroy in the open veldt, but when the train was six miles out the Boers opened fire upon it; the trucks were then impelled forward, while the engine doubled on its track to Mafeking. The Boers, not understanding the object of this manœuvre, continued to fire upon the dynamite, until the whole twenty tons went up in one grand flare, to their great surprise and fear. They were always more or less circumspect in regard to the armoured train after this. On the 14th, a Protectorate Regiment detachment which had been sent out to support the operations of the train, was decoyed too far from the line and ambushed; fortunately, however, they got away again, having lost only two killed and sixteen wounded.

The enemy now gradually moved their camps and trenches closer to the town, occupying every small rise or roughness of the ground which could afford them protection; and the name of "hill" was given to several of these features, which would have been too insignificant to notice in a less featureless landscape. Some brickfields east of Mafeking offered a particularly valuable site for annoying the town, and they were constantly occupied by the Boer snipers. Their



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Ready for a Boer attack on the advanced trenches at Mafeking

artillery was altogether superior to that of the defence, which it outranged so much that when a couple of guns opened from Signal Hill, three and a half miles off, the garrison had no means of replying. Snyman thereupon, to save bloodshed; sent in a flag of truce asking if they surrendered. Baden-Powell treated the envoy to lunch, and sent him back with a message asking when the bloodshed would commence, because so far only one fowl had been killed.

The Boers now cut off the water supply, but the "meercat" had foreseen this move; all the tanks in the town were full, and a regular supply was also assured by wells which he had had dug in the bed of the Molopo River.

During the next week the bombardment slackened, a pause of which advantage was taken to perfect the trenches and bombproof shelters. At first the inhabitants considered it the reverse of courageous to take advantage of the shelters, but long before the end of the siege wiser counsels prevailed, and almost every house had its shelter, roofed with rails, besides underground tunnels to the women's laager. Throughout the siege, too, look-out men signalled the quarter of the town towards which the Boers were aiming, and the instant after the flash was discerned an alarm bell pealed; this gave the inhabitants just sufficient time to take cover before the missile arrived. Thus, although the houses were knocked about a good deal, the damage to flesh and blood proved exceedingly slight.

The Boers gradually brought their trenches at the Brickfields to within 1200 yards of the town. On 21st October, they received a Long Tom, a huge Creusot breech-loader which fired a 94-lb. shell at six miles; it was nicknamed "Big Ben" by the garrison, whose marksmen took every opportunity of stealing

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out beyond the lines and picking off the gunners, so that the great weapon had repeatedly to be moved. Cronje chivalrously warned the garrison that he would have to bombard the town; in return for this courtesy Baden-Powell mentioned that dynamite mines had been laid all round the defences, information which naturally made the Boers more cautious in their approaches than ever. During the bombardment by Big Ben, the inhabitants were recommended by their cheerful and tireless commandant to "spend the day underground, with a supply of food and literature". The monster shells duly arrived, with great noise and disturbance of the ground, but only one horse and one man were slightly injured, while another chicken succumbed!

On the 25th the Boers attempted an attack on the native village; they met with unexpected resistance, however, and abandoned the enterprise. The garrison retaliated two days later, when Captain FitzClarence and fifty-five men attacked an advanced trench on the racecourse. They stole through the darkness unperceived, and rushing into the trench, carried it with fixed bayonets, a species of warfare for which the Boers never displayed much stomach. Nevertheless, the surprised burghers put up a stout resistance, killing six and wounding nine of the assailants. The trench remained in their possession, but they were so much shaken by the sortie that for months they left the trench empty in advance of their true position.

There was an important outpost south of the town, called Cannon Kopje, where Colonel Walford had been placed with forty to fifty men. It was really the key to Mafeking, because if the Boers could place a gun there they might blow the town to atoms. This spot came under constant fire, and the look-out post

—an iron windmill—could be occupied only by the colonel and one of his men, the rest of the party sheltering in a trench forty yards back. After a steady bombardment for several days, the Boers attempted to seize this “Kopje” (31st October), and by way of diversion attacked the town simultaneously, while their scouts or spies also succeeded in disconnecting the telephone. At daybreak Walford saw them approaching, half-hidden by the long grass, and he at once ordered his guard to man the post; then the forty-five defenders, who lay among the rocks with virtually no cover, blazed away at the shadowy figures with two Maxims and their magazine rifles. The watchful Baden-Powell had also noticed the attack, and particularly the manœuvres of an outflanking party who were trying to get behind Walford. He promptly opened upon them with two of the 7-pounders, when the enemy, rising from their cover, fled to their horses and drew out of range. The loss of the garrison in this little affair was two officers and four men killed, five wounded.

Only a week later the British were again active, Major Godley with ninety men and three guns stealing out upon the western Boer camp. The surprise was complete, but immediately the enemy began to reinforce his position the assailants vanished again, having lost only five of their people. This constant mouse-and-trap business irritated the Boers exceedingly.

By the middle of November, Cronje's army, which comprised one-third of the Republic's total force, had been held idle for more than a month before this insignificant town and had achieved virtually nothing. On the 19th he moved off to the south with the bulk of his men, leaving Snyman in charge, with 2000 to 3000 men, one Long Tom and four smaller guns,

a force just strong enough to maintain the investment, but not capable of overcoming so wary and alert an antagonist as they here had to deal with. Snyman pursued a policy of passive offence. He brought out his friends from Johannesburg and showed them how the siege was progressing, by firing a few rounds occasionally; especially after December, when three more guns arrived. But apart from dealing with the innumerable false alarms which Baden-Powell originated, there was never any likelihood of hostilities becoming serious. On Sundays, by mutual agreement, the war was suspended, while both sides talked the matter over from their trenches, occasionally even exchanging such things as newspapers and whisky. Meanwhile, Colonel Plumer, a very active officer whose resources in men were quite inadequate, was trying to get down to Mafeking from the north, but despite repeated raids Snyman always managed to beat him off.

Within the town all supplies of every kind were strictly rationed. Meat there was in sufficiency, even to the end of the siege; but sugar and tea gradually disappeared, bread fell to 5 oz. per man per day and vegetables to 6 oz. except so far as they could be increased by the gardening activities of the inhabitants. A kind of porridge was also made out of ground-up forage oats, the husks being fed to the horses. Every wet night a tot of spirits was served out to the troops, at other times none. The native camp had soup kitchens at which horse stew was the regular menu. Complete order, if not plenty, reigned within the little garrison, and they seem to have suffered very little from that depressing spirit which so commonly seizes upon besieged armies.

Baden-Powell himself seemed tireless. During the

day he was either at headquarters or within his look-out post; during the night he roamed the veldt alone, spying out the Boer activities. He made admirable use of every conceivable trick to impress the enemy with his strength. Orders were boomed through large megaphones, issuing troop instructions to men who never existed in relation to marches which were never made, but the enemy had constantly to decide what were real and what false—no easy matter with a foe who was constantly jumping from one side to another of the lines with his irritating sorties. Dummy forts and even dummy armoured trains were built, upon which the Boer artillery expended much good ammunition. Men armed with home-made lances were ordered to parade in full view of the enemy, so that it might be reported that the dreaded Lancers had somehow managed to get into Mafeking. By repeating the flash signals that had been used during a night attack, the Boers were even induced to blaze away for some time at empty space. He also wrote to Snyman a note stating that he would never capture the town unless he made the attempt! Meanwhile, a newspaper, the *Mafeking Mail*, was got up; horse races and sports took place during the long winter months, and the Colonel even condescended to join in a concert by singing a song.

There was more deadly work behind all this, however; but it only flashed out at rare intervals. On 26th December, Snyman, whose lines had been creeping too close, had to repel a strong attack on Game Tree Hill, which commanded the chief grazing ground; here stood the only Boer fort north of the town, and having been inadequately examined, it was believed to comprise only a breastwork of sandbags with a shelter; whereas in fact it was a strong, fully

roofed work. At 2 a.m. on Boxing Day, Baden-Powell sent out the armoured train, followed by three guns, two Maxims, and 150 men, the right under Major Godley, the left under Colonel Hore. Panzera, as usual, commanded the guns; a further 110 men with one gun formed up in support. The plan was for the artillery and the armoured train to open a cross-fire upon the fort from about 1400 yards, the assaulting party meanwhile creeping up to within 200 yards. Unfortunately, however, Captain Vernon, who led the troops, gave the signal to cease fire when they were still nearly three-quarters of a mile from their objective; still more unfortunately, there happened by chance to be a double guard in the place. Nevertheless the British ran forward over the open ground, only to find that from the totally enclosed fort they were shot down without a chance. Some clambered on to the roof and endeavoured to break a way in with their rifle butts, others fired through the loopholes, but without avail. Captain Vernon and two other officers were killed; FitzClarence, who had brought up the supporting party, was wounded; and at last Baden-Powell gave orders for the survivors to retire. They then fell back upon the armoured train, having suffered forty-nine casualties to the Boers' eleven.

Despite this set-back, the garrison continually showed itself to be much more enterprising and alert than the enemy. In the Brickfields, particularly, they commenced a methodical attempt to drive the Boers away, running trenches close to the enemy's and gaining a little ground each day; by the middle of March the Boers abandoned this position altogether. Elsewhere, too, the lines were thrust farther out from Mafeking, and the garrison were also heartened by news from Lord Roberts, who had promised to relieve

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them during May, and by the constant efforts of Plumer to descend from the north. President Kruger, who was extremely dissatisfied with the state of affairs, now sent his grandson, Cornet Eloff, to Mafeking, with orders to take it at any cost, and this led to the most dramatic incident of the siege.

At 4 a.m. on the morning of 12th May, Eloff, with 225 men crept up to the native town at Hidden Hollow, between two forts (neither of which he attempted to carry), and despite the sentry's warning shot, pushed right through the English lines and into the town. There they commenced looting and firing the houses; meanwhile one party, led by Eloff himself, rushed on to Colonel Hore's headquarters, captured the colonel himself and seventeen of his people, and locked them in a room there. In this emergency the whole garrison was called to arms, but when it was found that the attack had not been supported by Snyman, and that the forts were still held which might close up Eloff's line of retreat, measures were promptly taken to shut him in. A runner carrying a message to Snyman was shot; the Boers outside dared not shell the place for fear of hitting their own men, and in short, after a fierce little combat, Eloff went back with ninety-seven of his men to Hore's headquarters, unlocked the door, and himself surrendered to his own prisoner. A little later "B. P." himself arrived, greeting the crestfallen but brave Boer with the laconic words, "Good evening, Commandant; will you have some dinner?"

The end of the long siege was now in sight. The Boers had already been moving away part of their material for some time, and now the scream of shrapnel and the puffs of white smoke, far out across the plain to the west, showed that Plumer was at last in the

CHAPTER XI

Siege of Peking Legations

Scarcely had the curtain descended upon the drama at Mafeking, when the world was startled by the Boxer outbreaks in China, the murder of an ambassador at Peking, and the imprisonment (which at the time seemed synonymous with the massacre) of the entire foreign diplomatic corps in the Chinese capital.

These troubles arose from the activities of the Boxer Society, or Fist of Righteous Harmony, a semi-religious body. For many years Europeans had been peacefully penetrating the country, exploiting its trade, building its railways, and trying to teach it western ways, also — the most heinous offence of all — endeavouring to spread Christianity in the place of the even more venerable doctrines of Buddha and Confucius; this wave of ideas was extremely repugnant to the vast inert and conservative Chinese population. The Boxers differed from the rest only in their attitude towards the white man's propaganda. They proposed to put it down by violence, an attitude in which they were supported by army leaders openly, and in secret by ministers of state; and although the Emperor, a mere boy, who was ruled by his mother the Empress Regent, publicly admonished his people for the frequent insults offered to foreigners in the capital, it was well understood that this was a mere Chinese artifice and that no punishment would follow further offences. In provincial towns, the old cry of

"foreign devil" pursued the unhappy traveller through the streets; and although it was not yet heard in Peking itself, the streets were filled with excited crowds, a species of inflammable matter that might explode at any moment.

On the last day of the nineteenth century the Rev. Sidney Brooks, a missionary, was murdered by Boxers near the capital. Three months later the *Peking Times* published a week's notice to quit to all the Christian churches, which closed with the words: "If you disobey we will pull down the buildings with our magic arts or burn them down with fire. Then repentance will be beyond your reach. (Signed) The Righteous Harmony Fist Society of the Empire." On 29th April a placard was carried through the streets which read: "So soon as the practice of the Boxers has been brought to perfection—wait for three times three or nine times nine"—(for these people believed in magic and incantations)—"then shall the devils meet their doom. The will of heaven is that the telegraph wires be first cut, then the railways torn up, and then shall the foreign devils be decapitated."

Despite this cheerful outlook, nothing was done beyond protests either to protect the valuable foreign interests or to safeguard the lives of the legion staffs; it being thought that a calm attitude would impress the people, whereas warlike measures might exasperate them and so precipitate a crisis. These tactics failed. A long and abnormal drought had unhappily brought much suffering to the Chinese, and the agitators astutely described it as owing to the disfavour of heaven because Christians were tolerated. The Boxers steadily became bolder. At the close of May they destroyed the railway within six miles of Peking's walls; the same night the British Legation

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offered to take outlying missions within its grounds. Clearly an outbreak was at hand.

The seat of this racial war was the heart of China's greatest city, amid its parks, its quaint and many-hued roofs, its peculiarly nasty smells, and even under the very shadow of the Imperial Palace wall. Draw a couple of rectangles adjacent to each other, and one slightly smaller than the other, and you have the outline of Peking (or Peiping, as it is now styled). Both rectangles were bordered by massive stone walls. That on the south was the Chinese city; that on the north, which was protected also by a deep moat, was the dominant or Tartar city, and it enclosed a smaller rectangle comprising the Imperial Palace and its grounds. A single long street ran straight through the Chinese city to the Tartar wall, where it entered through a massive stone gateway, the Chien Men; this gate was flanked by great wooden towers, painted red, with overhanging fluted green roofs. Within the gate a large ill-paved open space led to the Imperial Palace gates, and on the right-hand side was a long straight road, Legation Street. In the latter stood the various foreign residences, besides banks and stores owned or managed by Europeans; others were within a stone's throw of it. Here lay the scene of the siege—a small part of Tartar Peking, with the city wall on two sides, the Palace wall on the north, and houses and gardens on the west. Scattered about other parts of the great city were numerous missions, British, American, Roman Catholic, Russian, some of which were destroyed when the storm burst, whereas others stood like rocks in an ocean of angry humanity through all the months of siege and stress.

The British Legation, the largest and most easily defensible of the foreign residences, was a piece of

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ground enclosed by a wall ten feet high, with a canal (dry at this season) on one side and various wooden houses outside the wall on the others; within the wall stood eleven houses and numerous sheds, &c., and there were also five wells of good water. Thus the place was more or less self-contained, but unfortunately it could be fired into directly from the wall of the Imperial Palace. The other foreign legations were similar in design, but smaller and much more crowded.

When at last the diplomats realized that their inaction was ascribed to cowardice, they sent out an appeal for troops to protect them, and 330 Marines of various nations were then sent up from Tientsin; warships also stood off Taku Bar, ready to bombard the formidable forts there if necessary. The Marines narrowly escaped a clash at the outset with 6000 frenzied Boxers, but at the last instant the hearts of those who inspired the movement failed them, and the *Boxers were diplomatically escorted out of Peking by one gate while the Marines went in at another.* Few though they were, these troops saved the Legations, which could not possibly have maintained themselves without them.

Fugitives now began to come in from the country, carrying terrible stories of murder, massacre, outrage and arson, but within the city all remained ominously quiet. On 10th June, however, a student shot a Boxer during a row; the Legation people were then ordered to keep within their walls. Two days afterwards came a wholesale desertion of Chinese teachers and servants; those of the British departed amid the scornful taunts of Sergeant Herring, an old soldier well known in Peking, whose fine physique and raucous voice struck terror into the Chinese. It was said that he "strode through the city with the air of

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a man who was feared and who knew it". Had the Ministers displayed some tincture of the same firmness the siege might never have happened, for the army was still loyally obeying orders and the Boxers were a mere organized rabble. But affairs were allowed to drift from bad to worse. Admiral Seymour, who had set out from Tientsin with a strong relief force, found himself stopped by the destruction of the railway and the presence of a numerous Chinese armed force. From this date therefore the siege may be said to have commenced.

The Boxers spread about a rumour that the Red Hand was in Peking; this Red Hand was a charm which the superstitious people believed that foreigners set upon houses in order to drive the occupants mad. It had the desired effect. Riots broke out, Legation servants were attacked, and it became necessary to clear the Chinese out of the foreign quarter; during the evacuation the French fired volleys over their heads to hurry them along. That night the Boxers set fire to Christian property in various districts, burning down the American Board Mission, the East Cathedral and the Presbyterian Mission; some of the civilians in the Legation quarter became terrorized by these manifestations, and the Austrians, losing their heads, opened fire at random upon the crowds outside. Mobs of excited Boxers then prowled down one street after another, seeking an entrance into the foreign quarter; but barricades had been erected in every thoroughfare, mostly of Chinese carts turned on one side, and men armed with rifles kept the villains out. The Americans and Russians defended the south-west block, the Germans and French held the south-east; Austrians and Italians with a few Japanese, manned the north-east part, and the British held the

rest. Next day a man was caught trying to set fire to Legation Street; by dusk the Germans on the city wall had begun to exchange shots with the Boxers outside. The Boxers again tried all the roads into the quarter, and even charged the British post at the North Bridge, but were driven off with two killed and two wounded.

On the 15th, at 11 a.m., they started large fires in the western part of the city, and set about massacring the Chinese Christians (who numbered many thousands), going from house to house, murdering them systematically. Dr. Morrison, the *Times* correspondent, and Professor James led out a relief party, which gathered up as many of the fugitives as possible and shepherded them into the compound. They were housed in a palace called the Fu, to the number of about 2000, and they provided a valuable addition to the available labour supply. Brick and mud walls were now built across the streets as rapidly as possible, and manned by armed guards, but ammunition was so scarce that it was forbidden to fire except at a definite object. Nobody thought the siege would last more than a fortnight.

On the 16th the Boxers started a fire in a medicine shop outside the Great Gate. It rapidly attained huge dimensions; hundreds of houses were involved and enormous clouds of smoke rolled across the entire city. The huge tongues of flame, leaping sixty to seventy feet in the air, mingled with the crash of falling buildings and the fierce crackle of the burning masses, made an awful spectacle. From time to time a petrol store or fireworks stock went up with a greater roar. The nearest Chinese to the wall carried their property silently and swiftly down into the dry moat; meanwhile Boxers stalked around amid the destruction

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they had created, wearing great knives and swords. At about 3.30 in the afternoon the arcade on the western side of the Great Gate caught fire, and although the Chinese guard tried with a hose to keep it off the tower, the flames leaped to the roof; the dry timber, which was hundreds of years old, then burnt with indescribable fury, being fanned by the updraught through the chimney-like tower below.

In the morning of this same day a party of British caught thirty to forty Boxers in a little temple north of the Austrian Legation in the very act of butchering some native Christians, whom they had fastened to the walls while they performed their sacrificial rites. The Marines surrounded the place and shot the lot.

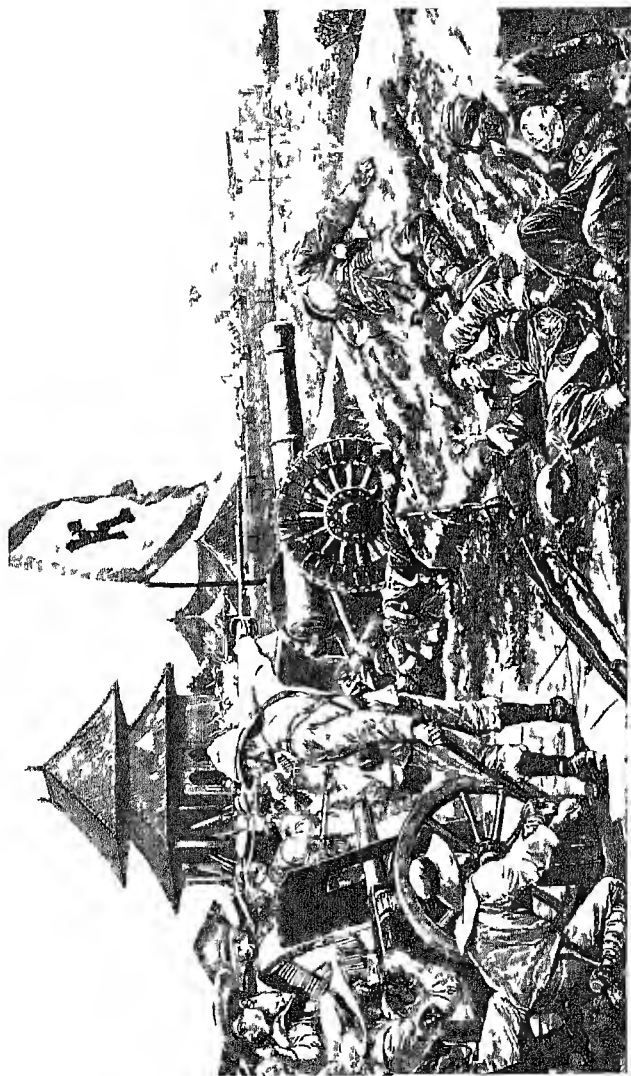
On Sunday, 17th June, the last courier came in, with the disappointing news that Admiral Seymour had been forced to retreat; thenceforward they heard nothing from the outside world for almost two months. The weather now broke also, heavy rain reducing the open country to a morass and rendering troop movements impracticable. Despite the downpour Chinese were observed to be searching among the still smoking ruins for anything worth taking away. A special effort was made to get provisions into the quarter, but repeated appeals to the government to check the rioters met with little response, for the troops were largely sympathetic towards them. On the 19th the foreign ministers were given twenty-four hours' notice to leave Peking, with a promise of a safe conduct; but although the chiefs hesitated, the general opinion was dead against incurring the risk of conducting several thousand women, children and Christian natives through a bitterly hostile country, with no better guard than 500 rifles. The ministers therefore demanded an audience; and upon no answer being

returned, the German ambassador, Baron von Ketteler, accompanied only by his secretary, insisted on going out to the palace; but he had scarcely left the compound when he was shot dead and his secretary wounded.

Fortunately a large store of wheat was now discovered. There was an ample supply of rice and tinned foods, also plenty of forage for the 150 ponies and mules, which in themselves provided a reserve of fresh meat. Everybody, whatever his rank, now set to work collecting and storing the supplies in the British Legation; where, besides its own full population, Russian, French and Japanese women and children gathered, likewise Norwegian, French and Italian mission sisters, priests, &c.; for it was understood that if the other posts had to be abandoned the occupants should all retire behind the British wall.

The garrison comprised 18 officers and 389 marines, besides 100 volunteers; the latter included several military men, notably Colonel Shiba, the Japanese military attaché, Captain F. G. Poole, Herr von Strauch, of the Imperial German Guard, Captain Percy Smith and Mr. Nigel Oliphant. The shortage of ammunition was their greatest weakness. The Japanese had only 100 rounds per man, while even the best-situated did not possess 300 rounds. There was also a great shortage of sandbags; and sewing parties were soon at work, who were incessantly employed in making sandbags out of curtains, table linen, trousers legs, or anything else which might serve the purpose. The artillery comprised but a single Italian 1-pounder and three machine-guns—one Austrian, one American, and an ancient British Nordenfeldt, "warranted to jam at every fourth round".

Their first essay at active warfare was disastrous,



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for the Austrians abandoned their post in a panic, and it was burnt; this rendered the Customs House untenable, and next night the Belgian Legation was lost and burnt too. The British meanwhile had begun to cut down the trees beside the canal, so that their Nordenfeldt could command the road, the North Bridge and the wall of the Imperial Palace; from the latter Boxer snipers fired at everyone who tried to cross the canal. As the Japanese Legation and the Fu were beyond the canal, first a wall was built and then a tunnel, so that men might pass and repass in safety; but meanwhile casualties were frequent.

In the British lines the civilians were next organized, under Chinese Secretary Cockburn, each man having his allotted duties. Some were to look after the coolies, some built barricades, others formed, with the doctors, a sanitary squad, yet others comprised the Fire Brigade, the two engines of which were soon in constant requisition; for the Boxers' greatest ally was fire, which they called in whenever the wind seemed favourable.

On 22nd June shooting became more serious. Captain Thomann, the senior officer for the day, promptly and unaccountably became alarmed and ordered all his men to retreat to the British quarter; to their own disgust and that of their hosts, the Austrians, Germans, Italians, Japanese, Americans and Russians all poured in through the gate. The ministers now hurriedly met and appointed Sir Claude Macdonald commander-in-chief. He at once gave the order to right-about turn, and the various parties fortunately regained the posts which had been so foolishly abandoned, without the Chinese having detected their lost opportunity.

The Boxers next made great efforts to fire the British quarter, which unfortunately had wooden outbuildings and cottages on both sides of the wall. They began

on the afternoon of the panic by firing a large matting shed which stood dangerously close to Cockburn's house, while from the neighbouring roofs they poured a hail of bullets on the men who were trying to demolish the burning structure; but being very bad shots, they killed only a single private. The Fire Committee was not yet organized, the fire engine refused to work, and in the effort to save Cockburn's effects they suffered heavily, although in the end the house escaped!

This lesson was promptly taken to heart, volunteers commencing to demolish the buildings which adjoined the wall, both within and without. Chinese houses are built on wooden pillars that support the roof. These had to be cut through as far as practicable with axe and saw, usually under fire, and then pulled out with ropes, so as to bring the roof down with a crash.

On the north of the Legation stood a particularly dangerous mass of wooden halls, the Hanlin Library, but as it was the semi-sacred storehouse of Chinese official records everybody hoped that it would be spared. Nevertheless, as soon as a strong wind blew towards the Legation the Chinese fired it, and for some time the north stables and other outhouses were in danger from the long, fierce flames. But a hole was rapidly cut through the wall; and Captain Poole, followed by a squad of volunteers, rushed into the Hanlin, shot down some of the Boxers who were already flying out at the other end, and despite the fierce heat brought down the place with no more damage than a few burns. Most of the priceless manuscripts and books perished.

At the same time other fires were started, a terrifying experience for the women, who saw themselves

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surrounded by flames and dense black smoke. The whole of the Legation Street from the American wall to the Great Gate was consumed, and with it went the Russo-Chinese Bank. Although these conflagrations lessened the area which could be defended, they really assisted the besieged, because they destroyed innumerable sheds, dwellings, &c., by means of which an alert and intelligent enemy might have approached almost unperceived.

The increasing casualties necessitated a hospital. It was established in the British Chancery, under Miss Lambert, and had only eight patients at first; but the number steadily mounted until it touched 100. For all these cases there were only eleven beds, mattresses for the rest having to be laid on the ground; the poor wounded suffered besides from a plague of mosquitoes and flies, which also infested the unburied dead outside.

The Chinese, who had mounted a gun at the Great Gate, now commenced dropping shells into the American and German grounds; fortunately, however, their marksmanship was as bad as that of the infantry, most of the shells buzzing overhead and exploding harmlessly outside the city. To meet this menace the Americans and Germans bayoneted the foe off the wide top of the city wall, which they then occupied up to the edge of a large bastion, placing a strong sandbag barricade across it.

Next day the enemy, aided by a strong west wind, started a dangerous fire at the British southern stables, and got the gate itself well alight. They had also loop-holed the walls of near-by buildings, whence they kept up a sustained fire upon those who were vainly trying with water to put the fire out; a crowd of them even got up close to the wall with a flag, ready to rush

through as soon as the gate fell. Meanwhile, however, the British had been labouring like furies to erect a new and stout wall behind the gate; while a second party, tearing out the bricks farther along, made a hole through which Captain Halliday and a party of marines crawled, afterwards charging boldly into the burning houses and clearing the enemy away. Halliday was shot through the shoulder, but he refused to leave until the work was done and the danger over. For this act he subsequently received the V.C.

At the same time Chinese troops made a desperate attempt to get into the Fu. They were cleverly outwitted by the Japanese, who allowed them to enter, and then, when they were trapped between an angle of the wall and the loopholed walls of the defence, shot down a good many. After this experience they were always chary of entering through breaches, for fear of a second ambushade. That evening they threw fireballs into the Fu and set it ablaze; the Chinese Christians were then withdrawn to houses lying between the British and Russian Legations. This day the garrison had their first pony meat, which was to be their main standby during the next six weeks.

The Chinese now began to barricade the streets on their side, often close enough for the two parties to hurl brickbats at one another. The barricades near the French were so close that the Austrian *chargé d'affaires*, Rosthorn, and his gallant wife attempted to set them on fire by throwing across lighted straw which had been soaked in kerosene; the Chinese retaliated by a shower of stones, some of which struck the lady.

A concerted plan of attack was also developed, for firing now commenced upon all quarters at once; but most of the bullets and shells passed harmlessly overhead, so that the bombproof shelters which had been

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built to meet this emergency proved unnecessary. The days were now intensely hot, and the dry, dusty atmosphere, filled with the stench of rotting carcasses, was anything but pleasant within that confined space; but it had to be endured.

The Chinese, having mounted a gun in the Mongol Market only 200 yards from the West Gate of the British Legation, sent four shells successively into the upper floor of the stables; yet the only casualty was one pony. It was determined to stop this dangerous neighbour, however, and before dawn next morning forty marines of all nations, together with a few volunteers, started forth to capture the gun. They failed dismally, becoming lost in the maze of alleys; and then, upon being assailed by bullets from the loop-holed walls on every side, found it necessary to retreat, having accomplished nothing. Nevertheless, the Chinese were sufficiently impressed to remove the gun, which they never brought back.

All day on 30th June the French Legation was fiercely attacked. A midshipman was killed, a large part of the buildings took fire, and the defenders were driven back from point to point, despite every effort. Late in the evening a thunderstorm broke; but despite the notorious hatred of the Chinese for water, the attack continued; and while rain flooded the paths and lightning provided a too brilliant illumination, the crack of the rifles and the boom of the guns went on incessantly. Yet this attack, like all the others, died away again; and the enemy, who by a concerted rush might have got into the compound at more than one point, had not the heart to drive his offensive home.

On 1st July the city wall came in for attention, a gun being mounted there within 100 yards of the German barricade, over which its shells were soon

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bursting; in one day alone four men were killed and six wounded at this spot. The Americans, who held the adjacent stretch of wall, now came in for a similar attack from their side, and at night the Chinese threw up a barricade right against the feet of the American sentry, silently depositing brick upon brick without a sound; when morning came the astonished Americans found a solid barrier within a few feet of their position. This was perhaps the most critical moment of the siege. Immediately afterwards the Chinese rushed the German end, the guard retired, and they leaped over the barricade, thus bringing them in the rear of the Americans. The latter too had to withdraw and for a moment the Chinese held the wall, whence their guns could have rendered the American Legation untenable. To meet the crisis, Captain Myers at once led back a mixed force of American, British and Russian marines and recaptured the position.

The same afternoon another sortie upon a gun failed disastrously. The weapon had been annoying the defenders of the Fu. A band of Japanese, British, Austrians and Italians therefore set out to destroy it. On approaching its site, they found themselves in a narrow lane, walled up at the end by a barricade eight feet high, and with no exit except a small hole through the wall of the Fu. Bullets began to whistle down the lane, there was no cover to be had, and the Italians, deeming discretion the better part of valour, all rushed for the hole in the wall together, although they carried fixed bayonets; yet somehow they managed to get through with only a few pricks. The British more wisely stood with their backs flat against a receding part of the wall, suffering the leaden hail to pass; one after another then took a flying leap across the lane and into the hole. All escaped unhurt except the last, who

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was struck in the shoulder and leg. Meanwhile, the Japanese, who had been advancing upon the gun from the rear, also found themselves in difficulty and withdrew. This adventure cost three lives and four wounded, a heavy price in the eyes of the tiny garrison, where not a single man could be spared.

Next day, this gun having battered down part of the Fu wall, the enemy at last got a foothold in that position; they held one corner of the grounds, while the Japanese and Italians (and afterwards the British) clung to the rest. There were several sharp encounters here, the defence losing steadily by mere attrition. The Japanese now were reduced to eighteen all told, of whom eleven had been wounded.

At the same time the attack was renewed on the Americans who held the city wall. A new barricade and a little fort sprang into existence in the same almost magical way as the last, the Chinese obviously intending to shell the Americans out of their Legation. But Myers and his men, assisted by a few Russians and British, leaped over the barrier at daybreak on 3rd July, killed about twenty of the enemy, and captured some rifles and (what was still more welcome) a supply of bullets. Corporal Gregory, one of the best British N.C.O.s, was wounded during this action, as was Myers himself; the latter contracted typhoid soon afterwards, which kept him in hospital for the rest of the siege.

The Chinese next built a strong gun platform behind the Palace wall, on which they planted one modern gun and several ancient muzzle-loaders. The parapet was heightened and loopholed, and from here they could bombard the British, now only 300 yards away, in perfect security. One of their round shot passed through the dining-room of the British minister's

house and struck the top corner of a great picture of Queen Victoria, but without damaging it. Curiously enough, a similar thing had happened at Ladysmith; it was regarded as a good omen by the superstitious, but the more practical-minded men tried to devise some effective way of stopping the gun. An American gunner named Mitchell, together with the British armourer 'Thoms, adapted an ancient Chinese cannon to fire shot which the Russians manufactured; it was fitted on rickshaw wheels and was christened the *Betsy*. At the first discharge "there was a deafening din, the gun turned head over heels, and the rickshaw wheels went to pieces". Nevertheless, *Betsy*, which was then mounted on a spare carriage belonging to the Italian 1-pounder, did yeoman service, being carted wherever the greatest danger threatened. Leadcn candlesticks and incense pots were now being melted down to provide the necessary ammunition.

On 8th July the enemy again attacked in the Fu, but *Betsy* was sent across there and the attack was crushed. During a similar attempt upon the French section, Captain Thomann was killed. The rival lines now stretched diagonally across the Fu grounds, each side holding one-half, but the position of the defence was always most precarious. On the following day, immediately after a heavy attack, the Italians became panic-stricken and fled; providentially the Chinese once again failed to take advantage of the situation, so that Don Lino Caetani, the commander, succeeded in rallying his men and reoccupying the post. Thereafter this extremely important position was held by British marines and the few Japanese, with Italians in support.

The ministers had now been besieged a month, and although reports of relief expeditions constantly

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trickled through; nothing more substantial followed; hope gave place to despair, despair to hope, while the hospital roll grew to 108 and everybody was living on short rations, and with tightened belts. The greater efficiency of the Chinese gunfire, too, necessitated incessant repair work at the barricades; here, as at Lucknow, sleep was a rare luxury, usually taken only after absolute exhaustion and interrupted at every other time.

Yet the fight still went on. The gun in the Fu was now only fifty yards away, firing point-blank at the obstacles so feverishly piled up by the defenders. During a fierce fusillade on the 13th the Italians again broke and fled, thereby opening a gap between the British and the Japanese; but for the fourth time the Chinese omitted to seize their opportunity, and the gap was closed once more. On this occasion, Mr. Norris, who had already distinguished himself as a man who was impervious to bullets and fever alike, had an extraordinary escape, being struck in the neck by a piece of shell and stunned. When he came to he was able to walk to the hospital to have the wound dressed and in a few days was about again.

The enemy, who had already made several half-hearted attempts at mining, now scored a decided success by that method. At about 6 p.m., on the 13th, two great explosions in the French Legation announced that a house had been blown up. The ruins caught fire, and the French, who were driven out of all the main buildings, took refuge behind a line of trenches. Simultaneously a desperate attempt was made to break into the German Legation near by; the enemy managed to enter the Club, which they set on fire, but they were driven out again at the bayonet's point. So serious did the position now appear that the alarm bell was

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rung in the British Legation and all the gates closed; fortunately, however, the attack died down after a couple of hours. All through the night the French Legation was burning, its glare serving to illumine the frantic labours of the coolies who were building new sandbag barricades. Some of these poor fellows fell asleep from utter exhaustion.

On the morning of 17th July the garrison suffered its greatest loss. Captain Strouts, Dr. Morrison, and Colonel Shiba were crossing a dangerous piece of open ground in the Fu when they suddenly found themselves in a hail of bullets. Strouts fell, mortally wounded; Morrison was struck in the leg; and Shiba, although he escaped unhurt, had a bullet through his coat.

But now the tension began to ease at last. The following day orders arrived from the Chinese government to cease firing; and for nearly a month there ensued an uneasy peace, punctuated by daily outbursts of rifle fire at one place or another. Meanwhile, the deeply wronged ministers and the government exchanged letters of mutual recrimination, without in any material respect improving the position of the besieged. It became clear, however, that the populace were not as ill-disposed as their masters. They came willingly up to the barriers, traded food with the "foreign devils", and even sold rifles and bullets to the Japanese for fifteen dollars apiece.

So matters drifted on until August, the hopes of the imprisoned people being first raised by the news that a relief expedition was actually on the road, and then dashed by its persistent non-appearance. Meanwhile, the British, who were determined to take nothing for granted, strengthened their walls, besides digging a deep trench inside so as to unearth any

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possible mines. Von Strauch, likewise, conceived the idea of occupying and barricading the ruined houses on the Legation side of the Mongol Market; it was carried out to the accompaniment of constant sniping, despite the armistice.

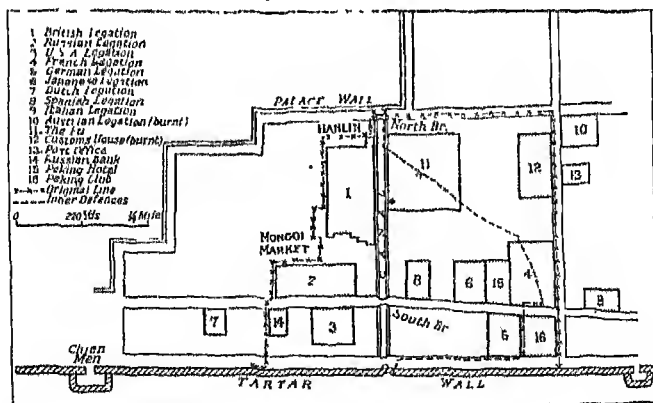
In the first week of August the Chinese changed their tactics. No more food was allowed to be sent in. Injunction after injunction to depart reached the ambassadors, only to be as steadfastly ignored; for to leave their shelter for the vastly greater insecurity of a country swarming with fanatical bandits would have been madness; besides, it was suspected that this change of tone was due to the near approach of the relieving armies, and this actually proved to be the case. Food now fell so low that the Chinese Christians had to be fed on a revolting "bread" made from a little grain, chopped straw, &c.; but there was an air of confidence which made even that seem palatable. Some of the more optimistic British even got out designs for a commemoration medal, little dreaming what yet remained in store for them.

On 10th August messengers reached the enclosure from Generals Gaselee and Fukushima, the first definite news of the outer world which they had had for almost two months. They said that the Chinese troops had been twice defeated in pitched battles; the generals counted on reaching the capital by the 14th.

But the assailants of the Legations were perfectly awarc of all this, and were determined to snatch their prey away at the last instant. They opened a terrific fusillade on the 11th, 12th and 13th, missiles of all descriptions hurtling into and over the buildings; the continuous crack, crack of the rifles, the deeper boom of the guns, the whistling of shot overhead, might have been terrifying had not everyone known relief to

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be so near. Crowds of soldiers could be seen behind the Chinese barricades, but when their leaders tried to urge them forward, neither precept nor example would avail; apart from the fanatical Boxers their hearts had gone out of the struggle, and they refused to advance to the assault. So, after all this din and tumult, nothing came but dawn of the 14th, when the relieving columns were actually in sight of the city's walls. Later in the day a detachment of Sikhs arrived; then British and Japanese troops; then the other detachments. The siege was over; and although the Boxers continued for some time their campaign of pillage and murder, and it proved necessary for most of the missionaries to leave Peking for a while, never again did the improvidence of the foreign governments, coupled with the unrestrained passion of the Chinese, infringe the laws of nations by attempting the massacre of a few scores of diplomats.



CHAPTER XII

The Siege of Port Arthur

Friction between Russians and Japanese was noticeable during the efforts to relieve Peking; and this mutual ill-will, which rapidly grew when both countries coveted Manchuria and Korea, culminated in the war of 1904-5. From the Japanese point of view a special grievance was the loss of Port Arthur, which they had captured from China in 1894 at the cost of only eighteen lives. Largely through the efforts of Russia and Germany the Japanese had been compelled to give up this prize. It was now "leased" to Russia, and although its works were far from complete it was by nature one of the world's strongest fortresses; its spacious harbour also made an admirable base for the Pacific fleet. Consequently, when the Japanese, without declaring war, silently sent out Admiral Togo's fleet on the night of 8th February, 1904, and torpedoed two Russian battleships outside the harbour, Port Arthur at once leapt into the limelight; where it was to remain, pitilessly exposing the tragedy of modern warfare, for nearly a year.

The fortress surrounds an almost landlocked harbour near the end of Kwantung Peninsula, a narrow but mountainous wilderness, the many isolated rocky hills of which rise from fields of tall green millet. The original defence, the Chinese Wall, stood close to the town; but now there rose outside this wall girdle after girdle of forts and batteries, crowning the most

important hills in the vicinity, and each necessitating a separate assault. Each fort held from 200 to 300 men, complete with stores and water-supply, and was an exceedingly formidable obstacle in itself. It was fronted by a dry moat twenty to thirty feet deep, the inner wall of which rose steeply to the parapet fifty feet above. Inside the outer (counterscarp) wall of the moat was a subterranean bombproof gallery, divided by concrete walls into small chambers for riflemen and machine-gunners, with a narrow passage from one room to the next; nothing but mining and the most ruthless fighting from room to room could carry this gallery, yet until it was carried its defenders could freely sweep the ditch with their fire. Once the counterscarp had been won, and the ditch possessed, the assailants (or what remained of them) had to clamber to the parapet, whence they looked into the interior of the fort; and there they saw wire entanglements and sandbag barricades, behind which stood resolute men ready to pump lead into anyone who might venture to enter. Even when the works had been almost destroyed by artillery fire, they were often so closely covered by the guns of other defences in the rear as to be valueless to the victorious assailants. Finally, great tangles of barbed wire, some of it electrified, ran round each hill, the approaches to which were fully covered by rifle pits or machine-gun nests. Such were the *inner* defences of Port Arthur. In addition, outer lines had been roughly trenched along the hills from coast to coast, up to a total distance of eighteen miles, and ending only at Nan Shan, where the peninsula was less than two miles wide. When the Japanese attacked the place in 1904 they realized a little of all this, but they vastly underestimated the value of their foe. They thought that the Russians,

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once beaten in a stern fight, would flee and abandon the works, just as the Chinese had done ten years earlier. This is the dreadful story of how they were undeceived and how they yet triumphed by sheer pertinacity and gallantry, against a ruthless and stubborn foe.

For some months no land operations were commenced against the fortress. The Commandant, General Smirnof, took advantage of this respite to put large works in hand; heavy naval guns were landed and mounted; and the outlying hills (which had been badly neglected hitherto) were trenched as far as his limited means ran. Very different was the position of the Russian fleet, which included numerous craft from battleships downwards. Although there were exceptions, it was badly officered and badly handled. The Japanese, after vainly trying to tempt it out, with great gallantry made repeated attempts to block it up in the harbour, by sinking merchantmen at the entrance; but they never wholly succeeded, and despite the tireless watch kept by Admiral Togo outside the Russian minefield, ships occasionally stole through every obstacle into the beleaguered port, almost till the close of the struggle.

When land operations at last became imminent, the defence could muster 50,000 men, with 650 guns, ample supplies of ammunition and food, and a position which they believed to be impregnable. Unfortunately, however, General Stoessel, Smirnof's superior, who had been ordered to Manchuria, suppressed the order and remained at Port Arthur; and there was much friction between him and his subordinate. The real hero of the defence, Major-General Kondrachenko, of the East Siberian Rifles, only came to the fore at a later date. At the outset the Japanese

slightly exceeded their opponents in number, but they were constantly reinforced until they had 100,000 troops on the peninsula, besides 900 guns, 72 of which were 11-inch howitzers, which fired the hitherto unprecedented missile of a 500-lb. shell filled with high explosive. Despite these advantages, they began by a disaster, the entire siege train, including all the 11-inch guns, being sunk at sea.

On 26th May, after the Second Army had driven the Russian field force northwards into Manchuria, part of the Japanese turned aside and suddenly swooped down towards Port Arthur. At the narrows the immensely strong heights of Nan Shan were held by General Stoessel in force; but the Russians had not yet learnt to respect their little foes and to their own astonishment they were unceremoniously bayoneted out of the hills and far along the road to the fortress. Had the Japanese followed up this victory many of the Russian defences which were afterwards built could not have been such thorns in their side; but here, as at Sebastopol, the chance was lost and a fearfully heavy price had to be paid for it. The Japanese now occupied the port of Dalny, brought across their Third Army, and meanwhile contented themselves with holding back Stoessel on the fortress side and Kuropatkin on the other.

The Third Army was the instrument chosen to take Port Arthur. It was commanded by General Count Nogi, a kindly, courteous and able nobleman, one of whose sons had just been killed at Nan Shan; his opponent, Stoessel, was just the reverse, being a blustering and very ordinary soldier, who quarrelled constantly with his subordinate Smirnoff, the fortress commandant, and who really had no right to be at Port Arthur at all.



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A Russian Battery in action, Port Arthur

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At first the invaders stretched in an almost straight line from sea to sea, facing a wilderness of hills and rugged, steep-sided valleys; Russian mountain batteries and machine-guns commanded the principal passes, while the hills had been roughly trenched and in places marked out for batteries. Incomplete though these works were, yet they held up the Japanese for many weeks, while the roar of battle—the crack of the shrapnel, the pop-pop-pop of machine-guns, the savage cries of the fighters mingled with the groans of the wounded and the crash of falling bodies down the rocks—filled all the passes. The defenders fought well, and although some crests were taken again and again at the bayonet's point very little progress was made during June and most of July; but at last the Russians gave way on the Port Arthur coast, so that their foes, getting behind the hills, placed the whole position in danger of envelopment. Stoessel then ordered a withdrawal to the next line of defence; it was left to the very last instant, some of the retreating troops having to swim across a bay in order to escape capture. Pressing on with headlong fury, the Japanese had by the middle of August worked a huge semicircle nearly round the fortress, and had seized Headquarters Hill and 174-Metre Hill, two convenient outworks. Unhappily these successes gave them the idea that by a determined rush all the rest might be taken, just as had been the case in 1894; they little thought that a vastly greater number than their present entire army was to be killed, maimed or missing before the Rising Sun floated in the streets of Port Arthur.

A summons to surrender having been curtly rejected, on 19th August a general bombardment began, especially from the siege batteries facing the middle line of forts, where the great mass of Wangtai Hill

rose from behind the Chinese Wall, with a curving line of fortified hills as its permanent outworks. The firing was deliberate rather than rapid; but it was continuous and accurate, and it rose to an awe-inspiring crescendo, when the play of shrapnel and high explosive from over 300 weapons made an unbroken series of explosions rise above the crests.

Taking the defences in order from left to right, the eastern works formed a semicircle, comprising Fort Paiyin, nearest the sea, then Chikuan Battery, then the work known as Q, Chikuan Fort, P work, the East and West Panlung Forts, Fort Ehrlung and Fort Sungshu. The whole of these were outside the Chinese Wall, an old defence that had been greatly modernized and strengthened. Behind the wall were the masses of Naval Hill and Wangtai. Outside the girdle, in the centre of the peninsula, and so placed as to command the approach to the forts with a flank fire, stood the Waterworks Redoubt and the four Temple Redoubts.

Continuing the curve round to the opposite or western side of Port Arthur, we come to a still more rugged mass of heights—180-Metre Hill, 203-Metre Hill, a narrow ridge named Akasaka, and others, all more or less fortified and capable of a stern resistance; behind these lay the wall again, with its permanent forts similar to those on the east. Within this great girdle were various other hills—the rugged Tiger's Tail, overlooking the harbour, Golden Hill, Signal Hill, &c.—on all of which guns or batteries were placed at some time or other during the long struggle. The whole position was faced by tangles of barbed and plain wire, partly electrified; and although the Japanese had provided themselves with small rectangular steel shields, behind the shelter of which they could creep up to the wire so as to cut it, they never

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made more than a narrow gap through these barriers. This was Port Arthur; yet, incredible though it may seem, this was the place which they gaily hoped to storm, perhaps in a couple of days, immediately after the bombardment!

They decided first, however, to cut out the annoyance of the Waterworks Redoubt. A battalion of the 19th Regiment, creeping through the millet, wet to the skin, cut a narrow passage through the wire and secured a foothold in a trench 250 yards from the crest; but as soon as they advanced into the open the Russians smote them hip and thigh. Out of the first 180 to emerge, 150 fell, an appalling slaughter; but dribblets kept appearing from behind, and in this way a good few managed to get up to the moat, where they took shelter from the Russian fire. Now, however, they could advance no more; nor could they retreat, for the Russians incessantly scattered shrapnel over the slope; and when at last the survivors tried to flee, most of them were struck down before regaining the trench. This was a merciless war, and a truce was neither asked for nor granted. The bodies of the dead and the agonies of the wounded remained alike ignored; there they lay on the hillside, in mist and rain, until the putrefying masses raised a pestilential stench to heaven. After this experience, the Japanese left the Waterworks Redoubt severely alone until it could be properly besieged.

Simultaneously, and with equal bravery, the 9th and 11th Divisions expended their strength in vain efforts to smash the girdle of steel and concrete on the east. The instant that the guns ceased booming, crowds of Japanese infantry clambered up the water-courses, slippery with blood and littered with unburied dead, following the devious windings and often

losing their way; only to emerge in the mouths of the cannon and the nozzles of the Russian machine-guns. Bayonet struggles were common, both sides displaying extreme ferocity; meanwhile, the Russian guns ceaselessly spat shrapnel over the Japanese trenches. When night fell the slaughter ceased not; for the Japanese mostly elected to attack in the dark, except when illuminated by the intense light of magnesium rockets or the unblinking glare of a searchlight.

At the Panlung works a bitter struggle developed. The East Panlung battery, although pounded from every gun which could be brought to bear, continued gallantly to reply; and for three whole days, despite the crushing weight of the bombardment, the Russians lay securely within their splinter-proof shelters, suffering very little. Repeated attacks on this point met with no success, until at last, in the grey dawn of the 23rd, a few desperate men made a last effort, and by climbing up to the parapet succeeded in bombing out a machine-gun which had wrought much havoc. The trench round the work was now seized, while the artillery sprayed the interior of the fort with shrapnel; nevertheless, the Russians continued to toss dynamite grenades into the trench from above, while their own artillery kept the Japanese reserves from ascending the hill. A lieutenant and a dozen men crept out of the fort unobserved, and, descending to the trench, poured on the occupants such a sudden and severe flank fire that the Japanese fled in dismay; but those who had not been bowled over in the run to their own lines were reformed, and again advancing, destroyed the little band of Russians and reoccupied the trench. At length the continual pounding of the Japanese guns decided the struggle. The Russian commander fell; his men slipped away in twos and threes; but even

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now the battery could not be held, because the fire from the adjacent West Panlung battery completely controlled it. During this spell of stalemate a Japanese officer took matters into his own hands, by diverting a couple of companies to attack West Panlung. Unhappily for the Russians, their attention was wholly occupied by the eastern work; the unexpected raid upon them was successful, and they were soon driven out. But here again the parapets marked the true limit of advance; for those Japanese who were placed in occupation of the works were constantly fired upon from the main defences and suffered heavy losses.

Pressing home their advantage, the Japanese next night swept across the Chinese Wall in overwhelming strength, only to come to a dead halt before the machine-guns and grenades of the Russians on Wang-tai; by the fitful glare of the star-shells they were fully exposed and were mown down like corn-stalks. Peppered in front and flank, and stunned by the deafening detonation of shrapnel just over their heads, their position was hopeless; more than a thousand dead soon lay in that little space alone. By the end of the 24th it was all over; only the distorted bodies, putrefying in the warm summer air, remained to tell of their useless heroism. At the cost of 15,000 casualties the Japanese had at last learnt their lesson. Meanwhile, the Russians promptly began to repair the damage; but that they, as well as their foes, had been badly shaken by the struggle, is shown by a curious incident. A heavy thunderstorm broke on the night of the 26th; so both sides, each firmly convinced that the other was attacking, at once commenced a heavy bombardment of the thin air! Next night, however, came a real raid, a gallant party of Russian sailors storming their way into West Panlung; but they had

no better success than the Japanese and were all killed there.

Ordinary siege methods now came into play. The gunfire dwindled; the work of spade and pickaxe took its place. The Japanese sappers, protected by steel shields, gained a few yards each night, at an average cost of five casualties; the trenches were then deepened and strengthened, the main ones being four feet deep. The Russians searched the ground with shrapnel, but their sorties were few and ineffectual.

At 1 p.m. on 19th September, the Waterworks Redoubt having been approached in this way to within eighty yards, another attempt was made upon it. The Japanese began by peppering the fort with high explosive, but they could not silence the guns. After four hours they sent forward two scouts to investigate, each protected by a steel shield; one was killed immediately by a shell, but the other reached the parapet before being tumbled over. At 5.30 the infantry of the 9th Division were ordered to get ready; ten minutes later they ran into the open and advanced to the ditch at the double. From this very insecure shelter they tried to enter the fort in small parties, but were invariably shot down. Meanwhile, the Russians hurled hand grenades among the crowd huddled together in the ditch, until the survivors broke and fled; only a very few still held on, concealed within shell holes, but still waving their flag. Darkness came. At two in the morning another rush was made from below; the tired Russians were hurled out at the bayonet's point; and by dawn the remnants of the work, furiously afire, were in the enemy's hands. This success cost 500 men. The capture immediately afterwards of neighbouring positions, including the four Temple Redoubts, the Waterworks and the pipe line, caused the Russians

grave inconvenience; for they feared that their enemies would poison the water-supply, and thenceforth lived only on the limited quantities drawn from wells in the town. Another seasonable capture in this quarter was the narrow ridge called Namako, whence there was a fair view of the harbour; and now there began for the unhappy Russian fleet a period of dodging from pillar to post, in the vain endeavour to avoid the heavy shells which fell almost vertically from the sky: one unlucky battleship was struck a dozen times in a single day.

Following upon these successes, the Japanese attacked 203-Metre Hill, the dominating mass in the west. Although its defences were still decidedly flimsy, it now held cover for 1500 men, all determined to resist, and well handled. Two out of the three attacking columns were shot to pieces immediately they appeared, but the third, rushing impetuously forward, got into the Russian trench, only to find that they could not get out again. A steady fire of shrapnel cut off their retreat, an impenetrable wall of bayonets and machine-guns impeded their advance. They were left to their fate, dependent only upon the emergency rations on their backs. Dynamite and case shot rained down pitilessly upon their heads; nevertheless, they found sufficient cover to hold their ground for two whole days; then the enemy rolled down a keg of guncotton and blew many of the survivors, together with their shelter, to fragments. Those who were still unhurt fled, only to be caught by the barbed wire or bowled over like rabbits on the slope of the hill. This first experience of 203-Metre Hill cost the Japanese 2500 casualties, with absolutely nothing to show for it.

Again there was a delusive lull, while the exhausted battalions recruited their strength. The besiegers now

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received six 11-inch howitzers, which they mounted in three batteries so placed that the Russian spies could not detect them. The monsters fired a shell of 500 lb., which passed clean through the concrete "bomb-proofs" and on bursting inside created frightful havoc; however, many of the shells were so badly made that they failed to explode. The Russians began to collect them, and after they had retrieved several hundreds, fired them back from 11-inch guns of their own. But the new weapon undoubtedly began to affect the Russians' morale; their sense of security had vanished, for at any moment one of these unwelcome missiles might tear them into fragments. It also became known that Kuropatkin, after vainly trying to approach the fortress, had been defeated once more and driven still farther off into Manchuria; the garrison had no hope of relief, except from the arrival of the Baltic Fleet, which had not even started. The immense line to be defended, the increasing sickness, and the normal casualties of battle, also told upon them. Pony meat soon became the staple diet. Nevertheless the heroic Kondrachenko, and others who were fired by his example, did not despair; while the feebler-minded were stimulated by an order that anyone who retired from a fort without instructions would be shot without warning (and this order was actually carried out later).

The Japanese saps were now pushed still closer to all the eastern works. Hungry eyes began to watch the two Russian trenches that formed the final out-works; in the dead of night wire-cutters, half-blinded by the glare of searchlights, strove relentlessly to widen the gaps through which alone the infantry could find a way. Small parties began to raid first the lower trench and then the upper; and as soon as a

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foothold had been gained in either, covered ways were run up to it, so as to lessen the dreadful toll that was still exacted by the Russian shrapnel. Storming parties were ordered not to rush blindly over the parapet, but to crouch just under it until the artillery had smashed the inside with its repeated detonations. These tactics succeeded; every bit of ground gained was now held, nor could the Russians reverse the process.

On the 26th October began a second general assault, in the fond hope that by the 3rd November (the emperor's birthday) the rising sun might fly above the citadel of Port Arthur.

The bombardment reached a fury not hitherto attained; by day and night alike the crests were lighted with the glare of bursting shells, until the very hills seemed tired of echoing and re-echoing the thunder. Forts Chikuan, Ehrlung and Sungshu were the main foci of attack; they were badly damaged, but the defenders, deeply concealed in their galleries under the counterscarp and in the subterranean recesses of the forts, were largely immune, and when the critical hour came were as ready as ever. At noon on the 30th the shelling reached a climax; and then, while explosions were still resounding all along the crest, columns of black-clad infantry were launched at the same instant upon all the eastern works—Chikuan Battery, P work, Q work, Fort Chikuan, Fort Kobe, Fort Ehrlung and Fort Sungshu. They nowhere had more than 165 yards to go, but except at a single point were mown down like corn, despite the most desperate bravery. The Russians, unshaken by the four days' battering, met them with such a storm of fire that many fell before they were properly out of their own trenches. Everywhere the slopes

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were littered with bodies; while those who attained the ditch did so only to tumble into it and perish there. At Chikuan Battery the Russians even leaned over the parapet the better to pour their magazines into the advancing waves; at this place one shell alone brought down a dozen men, including a standard-bearer. In five minutes it was all over; the attack had failed. Even in the lower trench the Japanese could not maintain themselves; bombed unmercifully with grenades and blazing bundles of oil-soaked rags, they were driven out when the trench became a furnace, and the wounded were burned to death.

At other points the attack displayed much ingenuity. Opposite Q work a man was sent up to the top with a portable fire engine on his back, from which he sprayed petroleum on to the works as he ran; it succeeded and the place burnt for hours, but still the assailants could not get in. At P work those who had been repulsed in the first attack fled to the wire, only to meet their own reserves coming up; there was a struggle for a few moments and then the whole crowd surged uphill again, only to be thrown out of the ditch once more. Eventually, however, this work and the Kobe fort fell into Japanese hands; but these were the only successes they could claim after six days of intense, murderous battle. At Chikuan, Ehrlung and Sungshu they got up to the edge of the ditch and established themselves on the counterscarp; but the Russians still held the galleries underneath; it was impossible to cross the ditch and live, and so another stage of stalemate developed.

But at last the Japanese were *on* the forts, although not in them. There ensued a spell of most desperate and ghastly underground fighting and mining. The bloodstained walls and shattered rooms told a story

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afterwards more eloquent than words, of frenzied men on both sides fighting for their lives. By an unlucky mine explosion the Russians opened up a chamber at the end of one gallery; by industrious work underground near the others the Japanese blew a way into those likewise; and then, for many days and nights without intermission, they fought their way forward from one concrete chamber to the next. Sometimes it was necessary for a man to worm himself through a hole in the wall, dragging a sandbag behind him; then other bags were pushed through and silently erected into a rampart which afforded shelter from the enemy's bombs. First the Russians, and then the Japanese, even took a field gun into this horrid shambles and fired pointblank at each other. It took the Japanese nearly a month to occupy these galleries, but they succeeded in the end, thereby freeing the ditches and opening the way for the third general assault.

On the morning of 26th November, the artillery began its accustomed wail, but it quickly grew to a deafening roar. The trenches were packed with waiting infantry. Soon after noon a magazine blew up in Q; twenty minutes later the Japanese sprung a mine, which blew part of the parapet of Fort Chikuan sky-high. As the earth and concrete shot up the storming columns emerged; but once again the Russians received them with unshaken confidence and a fire that no troops could face for long. The ghastly "Tragedy Trench" in front of Chikuan Battery became once more like a bone torn between two savage dogs; the Japanese were bombed out of it, and the clothes of their wounded caught fire from the repeated explosions, so that they were burnt where they lay. At Q work the attack was once more shot to pieces; similarly Forts Ehrlung and Sungshu held

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their own; and although the Japanese died by thousands they gained nothing. At Fort Chikuan 400 men rushed the parapet immediately after the explosion of their mine, only to find a wire entanglement inside, and behind that the sandbags and rifle barrels of the stubborn defenders; riddled with bullets or charged down by cold steel, the intruders were ejected again, and by night were withdrawn to their own side of the ditch. Everywhere the Russians were triumphant; it looked indeed as if Port Arthur had justified its claim to be called impregnable.

At this crisis it was decided to endeavour to reanimate the troops and the clamorous public at home, by a hazardous, not to say desperate and foolish enterprise. There stood on a hill somewhat in the rear of Fort Sungshu a position called the Sungshu Supporting Battery; it was wholly commanded by Russian cannon, yet by an unexpected coup it might be seized. Success would mean that the Japanese could fire into the rear of those hateful forts; whatever the risk, they determined to try it. 2600 volunteers of all units, all picked men, were placed under General Nakamura, who himself led this forlorn hope out in the dead of night; silence being carefully maintained, for neither guns nor rifles were to be used till the last instant, but only the bayonet. The officers had orders to shoot offhand anyone who might falter. Unfortunately, some two miles had to be covered, and part of the rear division, losing its way, stumbled upon the Russian wire; but without giving the alarm it succeeded in getting back, just as the tragedy broke. A Russian searchlight suddenly picked up the advancing men. Instantly it was waved up and down; all the other searchlights came down upon the place; with an almost simultaneous crack magnesium star-shells threw

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their weird illumination upon the scene; and there were the 2600, completely unmasked, though themselves half blinded by the glare. Guns from all quarters now discharged upon them; but recovering, they rushed forward in a series of waves and even penetrated the wire, only for those who sprang up the slope beyond to tread on some hidden mines and be blown to bits. For a time the reserve fared better. It advanced column-wise up a ravine, and came to hand-grips with the Russians, but was bayoneted off; and then so accurate became the enemy's fire that whole rows of dead were found next morning, lying in ranks just as they had fallen. At between 2 and 3 a.m., the general having been severely wounded, the attack was called off; but less than half of the force responded, the others either being dead already or freezing to death during the bitterly cold night. So ended the Third General Assault, in an atmosphere of gloom and disaster.

Yet it was in this dark hour that the Japanese struck their first really fatal blow against the fortress. The twin summits of 203-Metre Hill had already defied them once. They were now still more formidable, one holding a deeply placed bombproof shelter and the other a breastwork, while a capacious trench ran completely round the hillside; moreover, General Kondrachenko, divining that the Japanese would next spring at this point, had moved thither just in time both men and guns from the eastern works. 203-Metre Hill was also protected in front by Asaka Ridge, a narrow knife-edge with a precipitous and rocky front, to storm which required both the agility of a cat and the pertinacity of a wolf. Fighting here began at dawn on 28th November and went on continuously until the 30th with no better results than elsewhere;

the entire slope was covered with dead, a hideous mass of arms, legs, headless bodies, frozen by the intense cold, and torn again and again by the plunging missiles from the guns of both sides. The artillery now took over. Every 11-in. howitzer available poured out a steady stream of 500-lb. shells, which fell in thousands upon the crests until the shape of the summit had visibly altered; others, exploding in rear of the works, tore great holes on the hillside and prevented the Russians from relieving those within. Day after day this went on; the supply of ammunition seemed illimitable; and at last the Russians could stand it no more. Those who still remained alive were withdrawn from the fatal hill, but so secretly that the Japanese knew nothing of it. At 1.45 p.m., on 5th December, the bombardment suddenly ceased, and the waiting infantry, with bayonets fixed, rushed up to the crest. To their delighted astonishment, not even a shot greeted them on the way; the Russians had at last been battered into silence. For the first time in this siege the Rising Sun floated above a dominant point. Instant advantage was taken of the fact to register the position of every ship in the distant harbour; by the end of the next day everyone of them, with but a single exception, had been sunk through the Japanese gunfire. The price paid for this success was appalling; between 12,000 and 14,000 casualties were admitted, the true total was never known. One of those who perished in the mad scramble up the hill was the second and only surviving son of General Nogi.

But Port Arthur could still present an iron ring of unbeaten forts on both sides; the vast expenditure of time, money and life had as yet battered a way through nothing but the outer defences. There still

remained food and munitions enough for a long siege; there still remained the possibility, slight though it might be, of relief from the Baltic Fleet. Only a day or two after the loss of 203-Metre Hill, in fact, some vessels succeeded in running through the blockade and carrying a small supply of luxuries to the sorely tried garrison. But shells were now daily crashing in the streets; and whatever his subordinates might feel, General Stoessel at least had clearly lost heart. While Kondrachenko remained in charge of the defence works even this canker from within had no effect on the men's morale; but he was killed in a casemate of Fort Chikuan on 15th December, by the entry and bursting of an 11-in. shell, and with him fell seven of his best officers. Thereafter the defence might still struggle gallantly on, but it had lost its real head.

The Japanese likewise had at last come to learn wisdom. They gave up their futile and fanatical assaults, and began elaborate mining, with the object of blowing up the three forts, Chikuan, Ehrlung and Sungshu. Other tunnels were started towards Chikuan Battery, Q work and the Chinese Wall, but they never came to fruition.

On 18th December, in the middle of the afternoon, ten charges of dynamite and guncotton, amounting to $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons, blew up the entire face of Fort Chikuan; but even then the interior remained undamaged, nor could the Japanese get across the gaping holes until the Russian fire had died away from lack of ammunition. That night the gallant defenders withdrew, by Stoessel's order, but against their own inclination and the wishes of Commandant Smirnoff; next morning the Japanese took possession of the first permanent work that they had occupied.

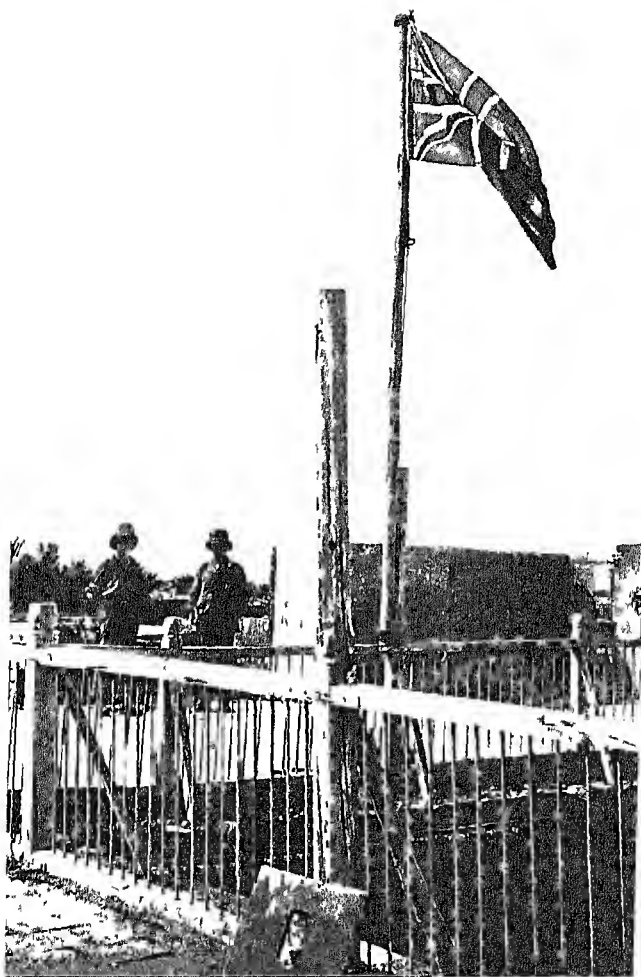
This was the beginning of the end. During Christ-

mas week all was got ready for destroying the face of Fort Ehrlung in the same way, and on the 28th three tons of explosives did their deadly work with complete success; here again, however, the interior remained secure, and only after a desperate fight, with mountain guns blowing the defenders out from a range of a few yards, did the Japanese secure possession. That night the Russians fired the remainder of the work and retired to the inner fortress.

It was now the turn of Fort Sungshu, which had hitherto defied every effort. At 10 a.m. on 31st December the mines were exploded, but with only partial results. Immediately afterwards, and just as the Japanese infantry were swarming in, a Russian countermine burst prematurely, blowing to fragments not only some of the assailants but also the commander of the fort and 140 of his men; the rest, imprisoned in the ruins, hoisted the white flag about an hour later.

Immediate advantage was taken of these startling successes. Next day both the Chinese wall and Wangtai were stormed.

The plight of the garrison, though now desperate, was far from hopeless. They held the entire western ring of forts, which had never yet been touched. Their flag still floated proudly above the Chikuan Battery. Naval Hill, Golden Hill, the Tiger's Tail, and all the rest, could still have been defended with stubborn pluck, thereby delaying the Japanese perhaps for weeks; and to the field army in Manchuria such a delay would have been invaluable. There were still 24,000 unwounded men in Port Arthur, with an immense supply of ammunition and adequate food for several weeks. The spirit of the garrison, though naturally much shaken, was not yet resigned to defeat. A determined commander would assuredly have made



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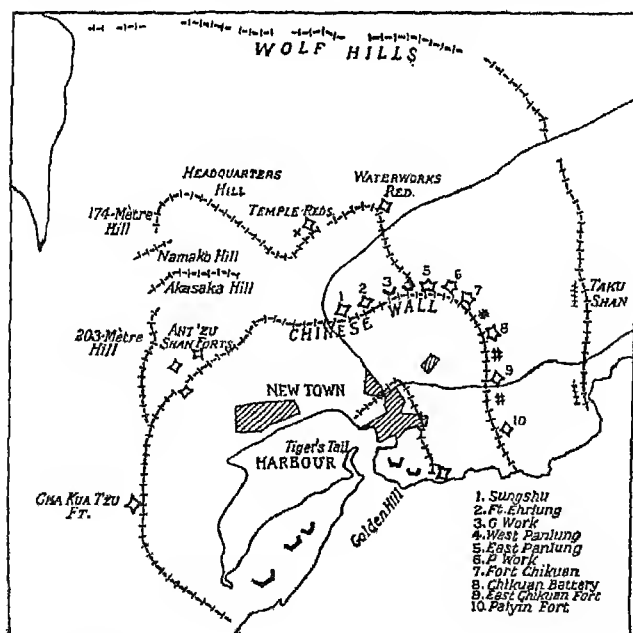
*The Union Jack flying from the roof of General Townshend's
house in Kut-el-Amara*

(From a photograph in the Imperial War Museum)

Chap XIII

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much out of all this; to surrender while there was still such a prospect of fighting on would never have occurred, let us say, to a Baden-Powell or a Townshend. But General Stoessel was cast in a different mould. Rightly or wrongly (the court-martial upon him said, wrongly) he thought the end had come. That night he gave orders to evacuate Chikuan Battery; and once the word "Surrender" had been noised abroad, the men got out of hand, and neither Smirnoff (who was for struggling on) nor anyone else could control them. Negotiations were now opened with the enemy, and on the 4th the Russians capitulated.



CHAPTER XIII

The Siege of Kut

More than 400 miles from the Persian Gulf, and lying in a U-shaped bend of the great river Tigris, with marshes on one side and desert on the other, is the small Arab town of Kut-el-Amara. At this insignificant spot, during the winter of 1915-16, occurred one of the most stirring dramas of the Great War. It is the story of how a small, poorly equipped force of British and Indians, after allowing themselves to be tempted too far inland in their headlong pursuit of the Turks, recoiled and took stand within the trenches and behind the mud walls of Kut, there to defy all the efforts of a mighty military force for well-nigh five months.

The Tigris and Euphrates are to the vast plain of Mesopotamia what the Nile is to Egypt, its life-blood; on either side is a desert, and all the towns of any note have for thousands of years been strung along these rivers. On the north-east the barren hills of Persia yield oil, which is transported by a pipe-line to the Persian Gulf. In the autumn of 1914 the prospect of Turkey's entering the Great War caused the Indian Government to send Sir John Nixon in charge of a small expedition to Basra, with the double object of impressing the Arabs and protecting the pipe-line from the Turks; under him were Generals Townshend, Goringe, Melliss, Delamain and Hoghton. The operations called for long marches through almost

uninhabited and roadless country, and the natural highway was the river; yet from the outset the water transport was pitifully small. The representations made by the men on the spot to remedy this state of affairs were neglected; and to this one cause may safely be ascribed all the subsequent disasters.

The first step was the unceremonious ejection of the Turks from the Basra district; and then, to protect the invaders, it was decided to occupy Amara, a town 200 miles upstream, before the defeated foe could reorganize there. With great promptitude Townshend, taking half a dozen officers and 42 British soldiers and sailors, went upstream, entered Amara before the Turks, and by sheer bluff induced the 600 troops in the place to capitulate; next day an improvised flotilla, comprising anything that would float—Townshend's Regatta, it was nicknamed—arrived with the army. Meanwhile, the beaten Turks had been approaching by a roundabout route; when they arrived they were promptly beaten again, with the loss of 1400 prisoners and 17 guns. The entire British casualties in this brilliant affair were 4 killed and 21 wounded.

Nasiriya, a town occupying a similar position on the Euphrates, the other great river of Mesopotamia, was now seized, after a stiff battle; and here the operations should have ceased. But the authorities, both in England and in India were toying with the idea of taking Baghdad, and by the prestige of that deed diverting attention from the Dardanelles, where their efforts had hitherto been anything but successful. Accordingly, on 23rd August, Townshend was ordered to advance to Kut, almost 200 miles farther up the Tigris. He took about 3000 British and 8000 Indian soldiers, with 32 guns and 4 seaplanes; but he had practically no land transport, and far too few river craft. Ad-

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vancing steadily under a temperature of 110° in the shade, the little army encountered the Turks at Es Sinn (28th September) and beat them again, but not decisively; the remnants fled towards Baghdad.

After a long halt until 24th October, permission was given to advance still farther from the already remote base at Basra; by that time the enemy had recovered and had strongly fortified Ctesiphon, sixteen miles from Baghdad. To this blunder others soon succeeded. The Viceroy of India, although aware that the Turks were about to be heavily reinforced, neglected to advise General Nixon of that vital fact; and despite the order to advance, no serious efforts were made to improve the transport, so that reserves and supplies arrived at the front in dribblets and were eaten up as soon as they appeared. The Turks, on the other hand, were stationary, and were not only heavily supported by fresh troops and guns, but soon afterwards had also the advice of Marshal Von der Goltz, a German strategist who had been the soul of the Dardanelles defence. Despite his own misgivings, however, Townshend gave the order to advance; and on 21st November his troops, flushed with success and in superb fighting trim (despite their weariness and lack of full rations), came upon the Turkish army at Ctesiphon.

The Turks had formed two powerful fortified lines, about a mile apart, with the river on their right; they were 20,000 strong, with many guns. Moreover, a reinforcement was at that moment within striking distance, and was actually spotted by one of the two British aviators whom Townshend had sent out; but this officer crashed in the desert and was captured, so that his report never reached headquarters. Townshend decided to attack at dawn next day; and with such

impetuosity was the charge pressed home that the Turks near the river bolted to their second line, with the British in hot pursuit. Both forces entered the second trench together, and after a struggle the Turks gave way here too, but they only fell back upon the entrenched mounds by the ruined Arch of Ctesiphon; and Townshend was not strong enough, either in artillery or in infantry, to eject them. The necessity of making a frontal attack had brought him an immense casualty list. The cavalry had lost one in six of its 1200 sabres; the infantry had suffered so heavily that the total loss was one in three. This was a Pyrrhic victory; for although the Turks had lost 9600 men, besides 1200 prisoners and 8 guns, their reinforcement at this crisis decided the battle. At night they attacked in turn, the British now holding the original Turkish first line; but all their savage rushes were valiantly stemmed. They then retreated; but Townshend, harassed by his own losses, by the difficulty of moving the wounded (except on the river steamers), and by the deplorable lack of everything necessary to drive his victory home, himself retired at the same time to Lajj. When the Turks discovered this, and began to follow him up, and to try to outflank him on the desert side, they were received by the cavalry with skill and dash, and were repeatedly driven back and dispersed.

Townshend now continued his withdrawal to Kut, making long marches and evading the Turks with great skill. Early on the morning of 3rd December, the victors of Kut, tired and dispirited, but by no means broken, marched back into its mean little alleys and mud-walled houses, 48 hours at least ahead of the enemy. For strategic and diplomatic reasons it was decided to hold the town; the fact was that if the retreat had been continued much longer it might have

led to a disaster. The cavalry were sent away; Nixon promised relief within a fortnight; and the troops, tired as they were, were set at once to digging trenches and erecting gun emplacements around the hitherto perfectly open town. The wounded were lodged in the Arab houses wherever room could be found for them. Unfortunately, the Arabs themselves were permitted to remain, thereby not only adding 6000 mouths to those who had to be fed, but also gratuitously providing the Turks with an endless supply of native spies. The chief lines of defence were drawn across the U; they enclosed an area roughly $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles square, the other sides being formed by the river front, where palm groves afforded some shelter to the besieged. Just above the town stood a bridge of boats across the Tigris, the far side leading to a Liquorice Factory, which was loopholed and entrenched. Space was found for 3000 horses. The provision supply seemed adequate for a month; but ammunition was scarce, and strict orders were issued to use it in emergencies only, and not to squander it in reckless gun practice.

All these preparations took time. They had not proceeded far when the Turkish outposts arrived; they were soon followed by the main body, 20,000 strong, who showed their contempt for Kut by a series of furious assaults. Firstly, on 9th December, they tried to rush the bridge of boats. They were driven off; but Townshend, fearing to exhaust his strength in defending the bridgehead, decided to abandon it, and two brave volunteers—Lieuts. Matthews and Sweet—swam across the rapid river that night, and blew up the far end of the bridge. It had been hoped that it would swing over against Kut; unluckily, however, many of the boats went adrift and were lost. This proved a sore hindrance later, when Townshend

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wanted to cross the river; but for the present the destruction of the bridge made him secure.

Next day the Turks made four determined assaults on the lines across the U, failing every time to gain a foothold. They then confined themselves for a fortnight to occasional bursts of shrapnel, which did more damage to the townsmen than to the besieged. But on Christmas Eve followed a most determined effort to get in. A breastwork known as the Bastion was systematically shelled until a breach had been made in it; afterwards 6000 Turks, fighting-mad, rushed across from the opposing trench and by sheer weight of numbers burst their way in. The defenders, however, had erected a second barrier within the work; and although the Turks made the most desperate efforts to pass it, seizing the bayonets of the men within, trying to place short ladders, smashing at the wall with clubbed rifles, they were beaten off completely; when they retired 2000 dead and wounded lay on the ground. After this taste of the British fighting animal at bay they became more cautious; never again did they try to storm a way into Kut. Trusting to their enormous superiority in numbers—they had now 30,000 men, with 83 guns—they waited for the ravages of time, hunger and disease to do their fell work, while the bulk of their troops were interposed between the garrison and the routes by which a relieving force must approach.

Now that Townshend had been completely shut in, those who were responsible for the expedition condescended to take some notice of its existence; but unfortunately they acted now as hastily as before they had been dilatory, and nobody seemed to realize the difficulty of troop operations in a roadless country 400 miles from the base—certainly nobody provided either

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adequate road or water transport, or thought of the inevitable sufferings of the wounded in a climate where injuries turned in a few hours into gangrene.

Two difficulties had to be faced. In the first place, the Turks of the north, fresh from their Gallipoli triumph, were hurrying down to the Tigris; and in the second place the rainy season had set in, the river was rising, and, except for a narrow strip near the bank, all the country on the left shore was a marsh. To add to the difficulties of the operation, the right bank, which was the shortest line of approach, bordered a country of ravines each of which provided a natural line of defence; in addition to which the Turks had established redoubts at several places between Amara and Kut. By waiting until February, or even March, many of these difficulties might have been overcome; but Townshend had undertaken to hold Kut only for a month; it was not known how long his food or ammunition would last; and the spur of urgency hurried everything forward, with disastrous results.

At the beginning of 1916, General Aylmer, with a mixed force of two divisions, detachments of the Connaught Rangers, Black Watch and Hampshires, totalling 19,000 men, with 46 guns, began a forward movement along both banks; General Younghusband leading with the 7th Division. On 7th January they fought a severe battle at Shaikh Saad, 25 miles from Kut. The Turks resisted with the confidence of first-class veteran troops; and after 48 hours' continuous struggle in the mud and rain, and the loss of 4000 men, Aylmer could only drive out the unbroken enemy, who retired to successive lines at the Wadi and Hanna. The British had only a single aeroplane and deplorably insufficient medical staff; but the advance was con-

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tinued. Seven days later the Turks were again beaten at the Battle of the Wadi, after another 48 hours' most stubborn struggle. They then fell back on Hanna, 17 miles from Kut; the sound of the firing here raised the hopes of the garrison, only for them to be dashed once more when the firing died down.

Aylmer's force was now reduced to 9000 fighting men, less than half of whom could actually be put into the line. Surrounded by a sea of mud, soaked by incessant rain, and chilled to the bone by the wind (which came over the marshes in gusts so violent that it was sometimes difficult to stand up against it), they were in no condition to proceed. Nevertheless, Nixon, who still held the chief command, ordered a further advance on the 17th. Next day Townshend telegraphed that he still had 22 days' food left, but that with the aid of horseflesh he could last out much longer; therefore there was no immediate urgency, but the situation of the relieving column being intolerable, Aylmer advanced upon Hanna. The enemy here held five successive lines of trenches, defended by wire, with the river on one side and swamps on the other. Thanks to the lack of transport, the British artillery was short of ammunition. Although they were ready to make the attempt on the 19th, the weather was so atrocious that the attack was postponed till the 21st, and even then the Black Watch and 41st Dogras, who led, were compelled to walk slowly forward, leaning on the wind, and in the teeth of the enemy's fire. Very few of them even reached the Turkish wire, and most of the officers were killed or wounded; but after a further bombardment, Younghusband ordered a fresh attack. It failed as badly as the first. Those who dropped wounded were smothered in the mud or drowned in the trenches. A third attempt was ordered,

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but the signalling arrangements had broken down, it was impossible to control the operations, and the merciless rain stopped everything. Throughout the night ceaseless efforts went on to get the wounded away; but it was necessary next day to call a truce for collecting the rest, and for burying the dead. This was the end of the first attempt to relieve Kut; it had cost 8000 casualties.

During the Hanna battle two men won the V.C. Captain J. A. Sinton, I.M.S., although shot through both arms and in the side, refused to go to hospital, and as long as daylight lasted continued his duties. An N.C.O. of the 41st Dogras, named Lala, was the other. Finding a British officer of another regiment lying wounded close to the enemy lines, he dragged him into a temporary shelter which he himself had made, and in which he had already bandaged four of the wounded. After binding up the officer's wounds, he heard calls from the adjutant of his own regiment, who was lying in the open severely wounded. The Turks were not more than 100 yards distant, and it seemed almost certain death to expose himself; nevertheless, Lala insisted upon going out, and offered to crawl back with the adjutant strapped on behind. This not being permitted, he stripped off his own clothing to keep the wounded man warm and stayed with him until just before dark, when he returned to the shelter. After darkness had fallen, he carried the officer who was already there back to the main trenches, and then returned with a stretcher and brought in the adjutant!

To Townshend and his men in Kut this set-back was a bitter disappointment; but it had to be faced. The rations were cut down. A systematic search of the native quarter then revealed a large store of hidden grain, which, of course, was immediately appropriated

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for the defence; nevertheless, the general was taking no chances, and on 1st February he cut down the ration to one-half. For meat there was still the horse-flesh, but the native troops had religious objections to tasting it, and Townshend thought it prudent not to press them.

Meanwhile, a second attempt was made at relief. Sir Percy Lake had now succeeded Nixon, with General Gorringe as his chief of staff. An attack was planned for 23rd February, and Townshend, with whom there was never any difficulty in communicating, warned his officers to be ready to break out of the town; but although the attack took place, the Turks could not be dislodged, and again the advance petered out.

Reinforcements were now pouring into Mesopotamia faster than the very limited organization at Basra could deal with them; and for a while chaos reigned supreme in that town of malaria and smells. While those at the base struggled vainly with the daily flood of demands from the front, and those at the front were cursing their inability to be supplied from the base, another march was set afoot, this time on the other and drier bank. Running inland from the river so as to curve round Kut, the Turks had constructed an entrenchment, with small forts at intervals; the crux of this line, the Dujaila Redoubt, was too far from their own main position to be immediately aided if attacked, and was moreover only seven miles from the river opposite Kut itself. Some line troops, also the cavalry under General Kemball, were detailed to march by night on the redoubt (8th March), while the main British force made a demonstration against the Turks on the Tigris. Unluckily, both movements went wrong. The difficulty of traversing the muddy country in the dark upset the time schedule; and when

the troops attacked at the Tigris the Turks were already waiting for them. At the other end of the line, Kemball found, as had been expected, that the Turks were in no great strength at the Redoubt—there were in fact only 200 of them; but instead of ordering an immediate assault he suspected a trap, and waited for three hours, until his artillery, by battering at the fort, had thoroughly aroused all the potential Turkish reinforcements in the vicinity. The troops then charged with great gallantry, and actually got into the redoubt itself; but they could only just maintain themselves there; and after a while the general, fearing lest the Turkish resistance should prove overwhelming, called them off, withdrew to an entrenched line on the Wadi, and so brought to a premature end the most likely attempt to relieve Kut. Townshend meantime had been unable to help, being across the river, and with no means of conveying his army to that side; nevertheless, if the attempt *had* been made, it must almost certainly have succeeded, even though it meant abandoning some 2000 wounded and a nucleus garrison of 3000 or 4000 to the risk of a sudden counter-attack.

Fortune does not smile on those who refuse her favours. The river now rose higher than ever. The trenches were drowned; on both sides operations ceased for nearly a month. Meantime, an appeal was issued to the troops in Kut not to be disheartened, and was accompanied with still another restriction in the ration; the men, according to Delamain's testimony, took this in splendid heart, and were determined to keep the flag flying till the end. The poor food led to a rapid increase in the hospital list; scurvy made its appearance, and was only partially combated by the herbs of all kinds that were taken from the town

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gardens. Nor were these herbs all innocuous, for Brigadier-General Hoghton ate some in the beginning of April and soon afterwards died of poisoning.

The relief force was now strengthened by a new Division, the 13th, together with General Maude, whose later triumphs were to shed a glory over the sorry history of those days. Both officers and men were very young, but they soon proved their worth. Mustering 30,000 rifles, with 127 guns, Gorringe and Maude attacked the Turks both at Hanna and on the opposite shore of the Tigris. The network of trenches was turned, and the Turks fell back to the farther end of the dry ground at Sannaiyat; had it not been for the exceptional floods, they might have been ejected from there too. The attack south of the river also prospered at first; but during the night of 5th April the wind blew so fiercely that the Turkish front had a dry length of not more than forty yards, which could only be attacked in front. At dawn on the 6th the 13th Division attempted to carry this line, but were met with such a torrent of bullets as would have shattered any troops; out of 13 officers and 266 other ranks, only 46 men and no officers emerged unscathed. The water continued to rise, and the operations again had to be suspended till next day; when, after a wretched night in the rain and mist, the attack was resumed at dawn. The first line carried everything before them; but the second faltered, could not be got forward in time to support the initial rush, and when full daylight came it was impossible to carry on in the teeth of the Turkish fire. To add to everyone's misery, the river now burst its banks, compelling both sides to retreat to embankments which rose above the flood; and here they stopped for more than a week, until Gorringe could launch yet

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another attack. The British then suddenly rushed a fort at Beit Ayessa, the river end of the defences that ran down to Dujaila; the Turks, who were caught napping, were ejected, and fortune seemed at last to have smiled upon the relief force. But the enemy fully realized the value of what had been lost, and during the next night fell upon Beit Ayessa with more than 10,000 men. There was a Homeric struggle, in which the Gurkhas and Highland Light Infantry were severely mauled; but the position was restored, and by 5.30 a.m. the Turks had been driven off, having lost almost half their force. A condition of stalemate now arose, for it was no easier for the British to get through than it had been for their brave and stubborn enemy.

Gorringe therefore tried once more on the other shore, attacking Sannaiyat, which was now surrounded by a sea of mud. The Black Watch, Seaforth Highlanders and 92nd Punjabis, slowly working their way forward under heavy fire, and in places up to their armpits in mud and water, gained the Turkish first trench, and even got a hold on the second; their rifles were choked with mud, and they had to fight with bayonets and bombs. The Turks counter-attacked, occasioning a struggle so dreadful and fierce as to be almost incredible. Those who fell in the mud or the shell-holes were drowned there; neither side would yield an inch. The Highlanders, shoulder to shoulder, and firm as a rock, had clearly withstood the shock, and they must have won through when the inevitable reaction came; but at that moment the folly of an officer (who perished during the day) ruined everything. He gave the order to retreat, having no authority to do so. Some men obeyed, others stood their ground; but the Turks, sweeping in upon the exposed flank of

the Highlanders and the Punjabis, rolled them back under an irresistible pressure. One regiment was virtually annihilated; yet still the conflict remained undecided, when the enemy suddenly demanded an armistice. The crowning mistake was made of granting it; the enemy gained sufficient time to recover his scattered units, and the chance of relieving Kut had gone for ever. All the British higher command being present, it was decided to call off further attempts.

The end had yet to come. For some days the few aeroplanes available had been dropping parcels of food into the beleaguered town; the total, however, was hopelessly inadequate, and only reached seven tons. Townshend has been blamed for not trying to cut his way out during the crisis of the Sannaiyat battle; but he could not do so. On that very day one of his Brigadiers wrote: "There is a vast amount of suffering from hunger among the troops;" and this had been going on for some time, so that they no longer had the strength to combat a resolute and ferocious foe. One last chance remained—to get a steamer up. The *Fulnar* was selected for this purpose. She carried 270 tons of provisions and was commanded by Commander Firman and Lieutenant Cowley, who knew the river thoroughly; Cowley, in fact, was so well known to the Turks that he prophesied his own death if ever he fell into their hands. Fighting against the strong, swirling flood of the Tigris, the *Fulnar* got up to Maquasis Fort, almost in sight of Kut; but the cunning Turks had here laid wires beneath the water to ensnare any relief vessels, and their guns at Maquasis were powerful enough to blow the *Fulnar* to pieces. At the fateful spot she caught on the wires and went aground. Her crew were killed, Firman and Cowley among them; whether they died in fair fight or were murdered after-

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wards has been a matter of keen controversy. Both received a posthumous V.C.

This was 24th April. The famished garrison were now reduced to serving out the emergency ration; meanwhile Townshend, acting on instructions from home, sought the best terms he could get. He offered to leave Kut, pay a million pounds, and retire down the river with the honours of war. Khalil Pasha, the Turkish commander on the spot, would have agreed, but his superior, Enver Bey, saw to the full the advantage of a second British disaster following on Gallipoli, and the offer was refused. The British Government then committed the extraordinary mistake of increasing their offer to two million pounds, but of course that was refused too. Khalil's terms were, "Unconditional surrender". And so, on 29th April, after five months of heroic endurance in an open town, the British flag came down at Kut, and Townshend and his gallant fellows went into captivity; a captivity so dreadful for many of them, that 4000—almost a third of the entire force—perished through hardships and ill-usage before they reached their prisons at the Bosphorus.

